

A PRACTICAL
EXPOSITION
OF THE
BEATITUDES,

In the First Part of Our
SAVIOUR'S SERMON
ON THE
MOUNT.

By *JAMES GARDINER*, M. A.
Sub-Dean of *Lincoln*.

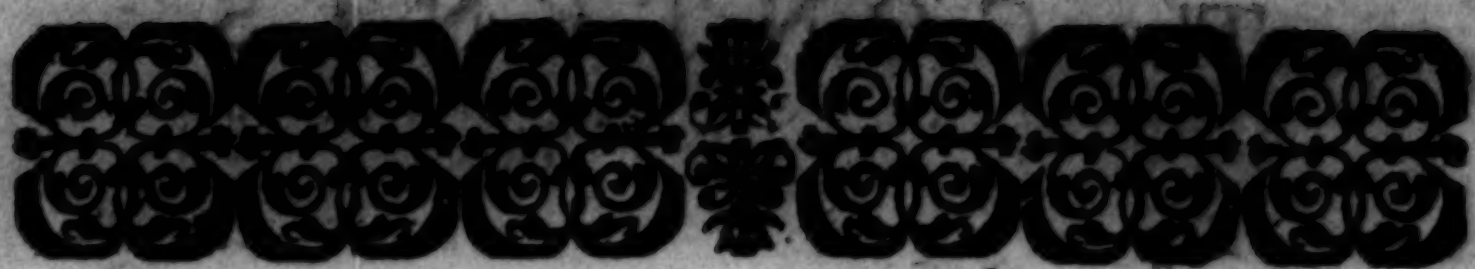
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A PRACTICAL
 EXPERIMENT
 ON THE
 BEHAVIOUR
 OF THE
 MOUNTAIN
 TURTLE



BY JAMES GARRARD, M.A.
 Sub-Dean of Exeter
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20 7/10 1791 CHAP. II

OF THE GOSPEL

MATT. V.

CONTENTS.

THE *Introduction.*

Page i

CHAP. I.

OF POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

MATT. V. 3.

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs
is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Page i

A 2

CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. II.

Of MOURNING.

MATT. V. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they
shall be comforted.*

p. 22

CHAP. III.

Of MEEKNESS.

MATT. V. 5.

*Blessed are the Meek, for they shall in-
herit the Earth.*



CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. IV.

Of Hungring and Thirsting after
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATT. V. 6.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and
thirst after righteousness, for they shall
be filled.*

p. 103

CHAP. V.

Of MERCY.

MATT. V. 7.

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall
obtain mercy.*

p. 122

CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. VI.

Of PURITY of HEART.

MATT. V. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they
shall see God.* p. 149

CHAP. VII.

Of P E A C E.

MATT. V. 9.

*Blessed are the peace-makers, for they
shall be called the children of God.*

p. 183

CHAP.

The CONTENTS.

CHAP. VIII.

Of PERSECUTION for Righteousness sake.

MATT. V. 10, 11, 12.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

D. 216

Printed

Printed for Bernard Lintott.

Sixteen Sermons, all (except One) Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's. Sermon. I. On *Monday January 31.* the Fast-Day for the execrable Murder of King Charles the Martyr. Sermon. II. The Nature and Necessity of *Religious Resolution*, in the Defence and Support of a *Good Cause*, in Times of Danger and Tryal. Sermon. III. The Church's Security, from the Providence of God defending Her, and the Goodness of Her own Cause and Constitution. Sermon. IV. The Sins and Vices of Mens Lives, the chief Cause of their *Ignorance*, and *Corrupt Opinions* in Religion. Sermon. V. A return to our former Good Old Principles and Practice, the only way to restore and preserve our Peace. Sermon. VI. The Law of Moses not of Eternal Obligation, and the Reasons of our Saviour's Conformity to it, when he came to remove it. Sermon. VII. The utter Inconsistence, and no Necessity of Observing the Law of Moses, together with the Profession of Christianity. Sermon. VIII. The Grace of God shewn to be not only Consistent with the Liberty of Man's Will, but the strongest Obligation to our own Endeavours. Sermon. IX. A Second Part on the same Text and Subject. Sermon. X. The Coming of the Holy Ghost consider'd, as depending on our Blessed Saviour's Intercession, together with his Office, as our Comforter, and his perpetual Residence in the Church of Christ. Sermon. XI. Of Grieving the Holy Spirit. Sermon. XII. The Nature and Instances of Spiritual Pride Explain'd, from our Saviour's Parable of the Pharisee and Publican. Sermon. XIII. The Folly and Danger of being conceited of our Spiritual Knowledge. Sermon. XIV. The Nature, Advantages, Object and Evidence of our Christian Hope. Sermon. XV. The Nature of Christian Forgiveness of Injuries, and by what Rules we may try our Practice of it. Sermon. XVI. Plain-dealing, Zeal and Integrity the indispensable Duty of the Christian Ministry, in times of Danger and Corruption; and the best means to secure the Honour and Reputation of their Sacred Order. By William Tilly, D. D. Fellow of C. C. C. Oxon, and Rector of Albury near Rycot in Oxfordshire. Price 6 s.



T H E



THE INTRODUCTION.

MATTH. V. 1, 2.

And seeing the Multitudes he went up into a Mountain ; and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him, — And he opened his Mouth and taught them, saying, &c.

THESE Words are the Preface to the Narrative of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, when having lately entred upon his Prophe-tick Office, he began to discharge his Authority by delivering a new and more excellent, a more refined and spiritual Law than that of *Moses* ; a nobler and more perfect System of Morality than either *Jews* or *Gentiles* understood before. As he came down from the eter-
B nal

nal Glory to *enlighten*, as well as from the everlasting Arms of Mercy to *redeem* the World ; 'twas necessary he should not only die a Sacrifice for us on the Cross, that we might be admitted to the Inheritance of Life and Happiness above, but by his Instructions also *shew us the Way* to that better Country where our Hopes and Inheritance are ; and so direct us how to qualify ourselves for that heavenly State of Purity and Perfection, that we *may be capable of it* ; and that the most absolute Holiness of God may not be rashly encroach'd upon, in Confidence of his infinite Mercy. Now all this is sufficiently provided for in the Laws and Precepts of Christianity, laid down in the *New Testament*, in the Writings of the Apostles, but especially in the Sermons of our Lord himself, and more particularly in this before us, which as it is the longest, so it is one of the clearest and most practical of all his publick Discourses, and plainly lays the Foundation of the whole Christian Moral Law. Now by way of Introduction to what the following Volume will present you with, I think it necessary to consider (.) The Solemnity observed by our Saviour in the Publication of this Part of his Doctrine. (2.) The



The Auditors to whom he delivered it.
And (3.) The Sermon it self, with Respect to two general Observations which ought to be made upon it.

I. *The Solemnity of the Publication:*
And to this the Circumstances of it lead us. It is here to be observed,

First, That he laid so great a Stress upon the Matter of these Instructions, that he would not entirely leave them to the After-Care of his Apostles, tho' they in the Discharge of their Ministry, for the Edification of his Church, were to be guided by the Holy Spirit, which should *lead them into all Truth*; but to stamp the more awful Character upon them, made use of the Authority of his own Person in delivering them out to his Disciples; as God had done before, when he pronounced the Ten Commandments from Mount *Sinai*. And this Observation will receive greater Force if we consider that it was GOD who still spake personally to them, tho' veiled and shrowded in our human Nature. It was not indeed delivered with that Pomp and Terror as before; because, as the *Israelites* were not then, Mankind is still not able to bear the Lustre and Majesty of the Divine Presence without some Allay. And God had promised, when

Exod. 20.
18, 19.

Deut. 18. he gratify'd the People of *Israel* in their
 17, 18. Request upon that Occasion, issuing out
 the other Remainder of his Will to them
 by the Intervention of *Moses*, that when
 he should blest them with a second more
 compleat Revelation of his Will in the
 future Age of the Church, he would
 in likemanner, comply with their Infir-
 mity. *I will raise them up a Prophet*
(said the Lord to Moses) from among
their Brethren like unto thee, and I will
put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall
speak unto them all that I shall command
him. This Promise was now fulfilled in
 Christ, who was both GOD and MAN
 in one Person. His Divine Nature
 gave Solemnity and Sanction to his Law;
 for, as the Evangelist takes Notice at
 the Conclusion of this Sermon on the
 Mount, *He taught them as one having*
Authority, and not as the Scribes: His
 human Nature, by which he was of the
 Seed of *Israel*, represented him as that
 Prophet from among their Brethren like
 unto *Moses*, and rendered the Delivery
 of it more gracious in the Hands of such
 a Mediator. But,

Secondly, We may observe that in far-
 ther Imitation of that solemn Precedent,
 the giving of the Moral Law to the *Jews*
 from Mount *Sinai*, Christ delivered his
 Instructions also from a Mountain: He
 retired

INTRODUCTION.

retired from the promiscuous Multitude, who crouded after him to gaze upon his Person only, or to see his Miracles, and not to be instructed in the Way to Happiness, and went up into a Mountain, where only those would take the Pains to follow him who were acted by *Conscience* more than Curiosity, and desired rather to learn their Duty than be furnish'd with surprizing things to be talk'd of. And hither accordingly such as these came to him: For the true Christian must stick at no Difficulties in following Christ, however steep the Access may be, and however singular they may seem in leaving the Multitudes behind them.

Thirdly, Having thus provided that none but pious Ears should hear him, (such only being worthy of these sublime Instructions) *He sate down*; a Posture used indeed by the *Jewish* Doctors in their Schools and Synagogues, but becoming only *Him*, who had, and shew'd hereby, the Authority of a Legislator. And being thus seated, he began to teach his Auditors. But,

II. Who these Auditors were is next to be considered. And by them we are here to understand; not only *the Twelve*, who were afterwards stiled Apostles, but the whole Body of his *Disciples*, all

such of that mixed Multitude in the Plain as were touch'd with a Belief that he was a Prophet sent from God, and *heard him*, as *Herod* heard the *Baptist*, *gladly*, and were willing to embrace the Doctrine he should teach them. For that *the whole Multitude* of such as had this good Disposition in them are call'd his *Disciples*, as well as *the Twelve*, is evident from several Passages in the History of our Saviour. And that his Auditors here are to be taken in such a Latitude is plain,

1. From this, That the Apostles were not named and chosen, nay some of them were not then so much as called to be
 Matth. 9. Disciples. For St. *Matthew*, who best
 9. knew the Time, gives not the Account of *his own* being called 'till a considerable Time after this Sermon was delivered.

2. That the necessary and particular Instructions which concern'd the Apostles as such, *viz.* as Preachers and Pub-
 Matth. 10. lishers of this Doctrine, are delivered in another Place. So that what was utter'd in this Discourse upon the Mountain, concern'd the Twelve (those of them who were present) rather as *Disciples* than *Apostles*.

3. The

3. The Matter or Argument of it, as a Collection or Body of certain Precepts for the ordering of a religious Life, can with no manner of Reason be applied peculiarly to his Apostles, but must be of equal Concern to all his Followers, to the whole Christian Church. And,

4. At the Close of this Sermon it is expressly said, *the People*, οἱ ὄχλοι, *the Multitudes were astonished at his Doctrine*. So that the Number must be greater than those Twelve. The only Observation I shall draw from this Enquiry, and the Conclusion form'd upon it, is, that the following Precepts belong not to the *Apostles* and their *Successors*, the Bishops and Clergy of the Church, in a particular and distinguishing manner, but in general to the *whole Body of Christians*; to all who were, or are, or ever shall be admitted into Christ's Religion, and expect Salvation by him. I proceed now,

III. To consider the *Sermon it self*, with regard to two general Observations which ought to be made upon it.

The First is, that Christ was herein the Author of a *New Law*. He improv'd the Moral Law, delivered by God and Moses to the *Jews*, to a much

greater Height and Severity of Duty than it was thought to extend to, or really did extend, before. I do not say he absolutely laid a new Foundation; for that he admitted those ancient Elements and Principles of Morality, is plain, by his insisting in this Discourse (either directly or by oblique Reference) upon the several Articles of it as laid down in the old *Jewish* Law. But the Additions he made, and his Improvements of them, are such as the *Jews* had never learn'd, their Doctors never taught before. For this Reason

Matth. 5. 20. our Saviour tells his Followers, that *except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees they should in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven.* Their Scribes were the publick Expounders of the Law; the Pharisees not only the severest Sect among them in their Pretences to Piety and Purity of Manners, and the most rigid Observers of the Law, but Doctors also who undertook to instruct others in it, and were always forward Speakers upon that Occasion; and yet the highest and the strictest Sense they either practised, or understood, or taught it in, fell very short of the Measures of Improvement which Christ by divine Authority refined

ned and raised it to. Accordingly in the 17th Verse of this fifth Chapter of *St. Matthew*, he says of himself, *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill: viz. to perfect and compleat it.* For by Law there we are not to understand the *Ceremonial*, (for *that* he came indeed to put an end to, so soon as he should have first fulfilled it, by the great Expiatory Sacrifice of himself, which was the Substance mystically pointed at in all those Legal Services:) but the *Moral* Law, which he fulfilled, by filling up those Lines and Measures of Perfection which were not (or at least were undiscover'd) in the former literal Obligation. 'Tis true, this has enlarg'd our Duty in many Particulars, more than *Nature* or than *Moses* told us of; but that's the *Excellence* of the Christian Religion. And 'tis highly *reasonable* that we should be called up by it to an higher Pitch of Virtue and a Train of Duties greater than before, because the *Rewards* proposed, the Promises of Life and Salvation made to the Observers of it (which were but imperfectly and obscurely hinted to the *Jews*, and scarcely thought of by the *Gentiles*, except by some few, and that with great Uncer-

Uncertainty,) are revealed, by the same Gospel, in the fullest and clearest Light. The *Helps* and *Assistances* also to perform what is required of us, are proportionably greater than were given before; and therefore the Gospel is call'd

² Cor. 3. *the administration of the Spirit*; the Grace and Influence of the holy Spirit of God being more abundantly poured out upon the Disciples of *Christ*, than ever they were upon those of *Moses*. And because such mighty Encouragements and Assistances are given, it is no wonder that our Work and Business is encreased, and that it exceeds the natural Abilities and Strength of Men. It may be objected, perhaps, that Christ has affirm'd of his own Institution, that

Matth. 11. *it is a light and easie burden*; and that

^{30.} St. *John* has taught us, *his commandments are not grievous*. But it may be answered, that as the Ceremonial Law, to which the *Jews* were subject, was apparently troublesome and uneasie, *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*; it was very proper to recommend the Christian Law to them under the contrary Character of *Easiness*, which certainly belongs to it in comparison with the other, because he erected this new Superstructure upon

on

on old Foundations, beating out only such Propositions as were before indeed in the Mass and Substance; or at least making up for what he added by the more powerful Effusions of his Grace and Spirit to assist us. If it be objected, that Christianity, as to the practical or moral Part of it, is therefore no *new Institution*, because, as we observed just now, it is very much built upon the old Foundation of *Moses* and the Prophets, and there wanted not many excellent Persons in the ancient *Jewish* Church who in the Light of that Dispensation only could see beyond the Letter of their Law, and shew'd by their Practice they understood it in a severer Sense; it is not hard to reply, That this may be resolv'd into particular Revelations and Assistances from God, to draw those nearer to himself whom he found disposed to come: And these Illuminations were not unfrequent amongst the Zealots and Prophets, who were oftentimes acted by the Spirit of God, and exceeded the common Measures of Sanctity and Religion; but the Particulars might nevertheless not be then enjoined so positively, as in this Discourse of our Saviour's; for surely had they been designed a Part of the *Jewish* Law, as well

well as of the *Christian*, they would have been more clearly and punctually incerted in the Body of the Precepts by which that Church was to be governed. These eminent Examples therefore are Instances out of the common Road, and influenced by a special Illumination; tho' living under the Law they were inspir'd with an higher Principle, enjoyed a Foretaste of the Spiritual Beauties of the Gospel, going beyond the Bounds of common Practice and Obligation, aim'd at a more perfect Piety and Virtue than what the Religion of their Country taught them, and were a Law to themselves where the *Mosaical* Law was carnal and imperfect. So that my Observation is still conclusive, that the Doctrine of Christ was a *new Institution*. And the Uses we are to make of this are two,

1. That we should pay a suitable Reverence to it. *If he that despised Moses law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and done despite unto the Spirit of Grace.*

Heb. 10.
28, 29.

2. That we should suit our Lives and Conversations to it. Is the Christian Law and Improvement beyond all former

mer Systems of Morality, a new Injunction from above, with a much larger Compass of Precepts, and much greater Certainty of Rewards; and shall we Christians content our selves with the Ceremonial Holiness and imperfect Morals of a *Jew*, or the obscure awkward Virtues of an *Heathen*? Our Conversations surely ought to be improved, in Proportion to the Doctrine we profess. Our Righteousness ought to *exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; to be more sincere, and inward, and universal, as the Law we are under is more refined, and spiritual, and extensive. But I proceed to the Second general Observation upon this Sermon in the Mount; and that is,

That it seemsto be a different Sermon from that recorded by St. *Luke* in the sixth Chapter of his Gospel. Some Interpreters, it's true, are of another Opinion, and take them both to be the same, because there are many Particulars of both in the same Words and Order; both directed to his Disciples, and not to the promiscuous Multitude; and it might be thought strange that St. *Luke*, who was a studious Collector of all the remarkable Passages in our Saviour's Life and Preaching, should omit an Instance

Instance so material as this Discourse upon the Mountain. But this last is no Argument, because it's certain he has omitted a great and noble Variety of Discourses, and of very great Importance, recorded by St. *John*, between our Saviour and the *Jews*, in Proof of his Divinity and Mission. Beside that giving us another of his Sermons so very like to this in St. *Matthew*, and so many of the same Doctrines in it, he might not think it requisite to record them both. And that the two former Grounds of their Opinion have as little in them, will appear from the Reasons which are given why those Sermons are not the same. As,

I. St. *Luke's* Omission of several Material Parts of that Discourse recorded by St. *Matthew*; as the Commentary upon the *third*, the *sixth*, and *seventh* Commandments; the Directions for Regulation of private Prayer, Alms and Fasting; that noble Representation of the Providence of God, related at the end of the sixth Chapter; the Promise that God will hear our Prayers, &c. that is, in fewer Words, all from the 13th to the 29th Verse of the *fifth* Chapter of St. *Matthew*, the whole *sixth* Chapter, and

and from Verse 6 to Verse the 16th of the *seventh*.

2. St. *Luke* has but *four Beatitudes*, St. *Matthew*, *eight*; and even those which are in both, are differently express'd. *Blessed be ye Poor*, says St. *Luke*; *poor in spirit*, says St. *Matthew*. *Blessed are ye that hunger*, the former has it; *they which hunger and thirst after righteousness*, the latter. *Blessed are ye that weep now*, for ye shall laugh, says that Evangelist; *Blessed are they that mourn*, for they shall be comforted, says this, &c. But suppose the Sermons were the same, St. *Luke*, as the shorter in his Relation of these Beatitudes, ought to be interpreted and understood by that larger and clearer Delivery of them in St. *Matthew*.

3. St. *Luke* has added several Woes, of which we find nothing at all in the other Evangelist.

4. As to point of *Time*. The Sermon recorded in St. *Matthew*, was certainly deliver'd before the healing of the Leper; for when Christ was come down from the Mountain the Leper came with his Request to him; whereas St. *Luke*, who promises to relate things in their proper Order, gives this Miracle of healing the Leper, Chap. 5. 12. and begins the Sermon he has recorded, Chap.

Matth. 8.

1, 2.

Luke 6.15. *Chap. 6. 17.* So also St. *Luke* reckons *Matthew* amongst the Twelve whom Christ had chosen, and says he went down with these Twelve, and preached the Sermon as it is there related; whereas St. *Matthew*, when the Sermon which He has given us was delivered, was not a Disciple, for he relates not his own being called 'till some Time after.

5. As to the Place and Posture also, St. *Matthew* is express that the Discourse was made by our Saviour, sitting, and on a Mountain; St. *Luke* is as clear, that when he said what he records, he was *standing*, and on a Plain.

6. There is a Difference also in the directing of these two Discourses; Blessed are *they*, in St. *Matthew*; Blessed are *Ye*, in St. *Luke*. The former is a standing Character to serve in all Ages of the Church of Christ; the latter seems a particular Address to the Disciples then about him, and an Application to their present Condition.

From all which it is thought reasonable to conclude, that the two Evangelists in these two Places pretend not to deliver one and the same Discourse, but that the like Sayings and Instructions being delivered at different Times, each Evangelist has inserted them in their proper

proper Places, in the Form as they were then, and upon that Occasion, delivered. The Importance of which Conclusion is no more than this, that if they are two different Discourses, there will be no Necessity of interpreting and explaining the one by the other.

Having thus consider'd the Sermon on the Mount in general, 'tis fit we should a little reflect upon the Beatitudes in particular, these being the immediate Subject of the following Treatise. And with these our Saviour begins, in publishing to the World that new Dispensation of the Gospel, we have so often spoke of, establish'd upon better Promises, and full of the most valuable Blessings, that we might see the Difference betwixt the Promulgation of the *former* Law and the *latter*. When the Law was given from Mount *Sinai*, *there were Thunders and Lightnings, and the Voice of a Trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the People that was in the Camp trembled; the Lord descended upon the Mount in Fire, and the Smoke thereof ascended as the Smoke of a Furnace, the Priests and People were kept at an awful Distance, lest the Lord should break forth upon them and consume them.* But in the delivering of the

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Christian

Ezek. 34.
25, 26.

Christian Law it was far otherwise; our Meek and Merciful Saviour (as it was prophecy'd of him, that by him God would *make a Covenant of Peace* with his People, and *make them and the Places round about his Hill a Blessing*) begins it with all the Mildness possible, and sheds abroad his Blessings with a bounteous Hand, represents the mighty Beauties and the great Advantages of Religion, that he may rather *allure* than compel Men to an Obedience which will make them happy. *Happiness* indeed or *Blessedness* has always been the great Enquiry of Mankind, the common Topic or the grand Conclusion proposed by all the Heathen Masters of Morality, but never clearly made out, never fully settled 'till our Saviour here determined it. The Schools of Philosophy at *Rome* and *Athens*, and elsewhere, argu'd themselves out of Breath upon this Subject, and pursu'd the Controversie 'till they perplex'd the Question with their various, wild, imperfect, and inconsistent Schemes: But Almighty God, who confounds the Wisdom of the Wise, provided a more excellent Way to manifest the Truth in an Affair of such Importance, revealing it by his Son Christ Jesus, who was better qualify'd

lisy'd than all those Philosophers to decide this Case, being himself compleatly blessed as God, and tho' in human Nature, free from the Blindness, Ignorance and depraved Affections of Mankind. As such he was the fittest Judge of true Felicity; he best knew what would make Men happy, and gave in his own Person and Character a lively Transcript of all that Happiness he taught. That he was *poor in Spirit*, humble and lowly, appears by his avoiding popular * Applause, declining Power and Honour, when the People would by Force ‡ have made him a King; ascribing to God the Glory of his Miracles * and his Doctrine; and giving Thanks to God * upon all Occasions, even for the common Benefits of Life; rejecting a State of Wealth and Plenty‡, and living all his Days in a poor and mean Condition, as knowing that a Man's Happiness consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth; and in a Word, tho' he was equal with God† yet for our sakes he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the death, even to the death of

the

* Matth. 8.

4. Mark 1.

45. ‡ John 6.

15. ‡ Luke 8.

39. * Matth. 11.

25. John 11.

41. ‡ Matth. 4.

8, 9, 10.

† Phil. 2. 6,

7, 8.

the Cross. That he was a true *Mourner* for the Sins of others and for their Sufferings (those were the only Sins he *could* mourn for, himself being without Spot, of Sin entirely innocent, and those the only Sufferings he thought deserved Concern,) is evident from his pathetic lamenting the Hardness and Obstinacy of the *Jews*, and the fatal Consequences of it in their utter Ruin, which he foresaw. His *Meekness* appears in many Instances; towards God, in a most absolute Submission to his Will under his most bitter Sufferings; toward the Governors of his Country, both in Church and State, by his frequenting the *Jewish* Synagogues, submitting to pay Tribute, surrendering willingly to the high Priest's Officers who took him, and acknowledging and yielding to the civil Power of *Pilate*, tho' he had done nothing which deserved his Sentence; toward his Parents, by a due Subjection to them; toward his Enemies, by the most perfect Patience under all their Malice and Reproaches, a cheerful Forgiveness of them, labouring all his Life to do them good, praying heartily for them upon the Cross, and undergoing Death for their Redemption and Salvation; toward his Friends his Disciples, by

† Luke 23.

28.

† Mark 23.

5.

Luke 19.

41, 42.

† John 18.

11.

Luke 22.

42.

* Luke 4.

16.

† Matth. 17.

27.

† Matth.

26. 47, &c.

† John 18.

36.

* Luke 2.

51.

by bearing with their Infirmities, and condescending to the lowest Offices of Kindness and Respect to them; toward his Inferiors, that is indeed to all Men, by the greatest Humility and Gentleness in every part of his Conduct, as might be shewn, if I had Time, in many Particulars. That he *hungred and thirsted after righteousness*, will need little Proof. He took care to fulfil all Righteousness himself; his whole Life was spent in labouring to promote it amongst others, and *he gave himself to Death for us*, to this very end, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. His *merciful* Temper shew'd it self in his tender and compassionate Sense of every *miserable Object which came in his way, and his readiness to relieve them: His kind Provision (made at the Expence of a Miracle) for the Multitudes ready to *faint with long attending upon him; his quitting the Care of his own Support † and necessary Refreshment, to heal those who had need of healing; his practising Charity ‡ to the Poor, and recommending it to others as a Kindness shewn * to himself. His Mercy to his Enemies, in forgiving and doing good to them, we have taken notice of

John 13.

4. 5.

Matth. 3.

15.

John 8. 46.

Tit. 2. 14.

*Matth. 20.

34.

Luke 7. 13.

*Matth. 14.

15.

† Luke 9.

11.

‡ John 13.

29.

*Matth.

25. 35.

above. The *Purity of his Heart* appears in the Innocence of his Life;

Luke 6. 46. *For a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil.* Not the worst of

his Enemies could charge him with an impure Word or Action, even those
 * John 8. 9. * who were conscious of their own Impurity. His *Peaceable* Disposition appears in several Particulars above-mentioned in the Account of his Meekness; and that he was indeed a *Peace-maker* we need only consider that he *spared not his own life, but gave it up upon the Cross*, to reconcile us to our offended God, and put an end to that fatal Quarrel which Sin had caused betwixt him and us. And lastly, that he was persecuted for Righteousness sake, the whole four Gospels sufficiently evidence, and I suppose no Christian will dispute it.

No doubt therefore, the *Poor in spirit*, the religious *Mourner*, the *Meek*, those that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, the *merciful*, the *pure in heart*, the *peace-makers*, and those that are *persecuted for righteousness sake*, are indeed the blessed and happy Men; since
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he who has pronounc'd them so, had a most perfect Knowledge of what true Happiness is, and having also the Power of being as blessed and happy as he would, thought fit to place his own Felicity in these Qualities, and to recommend them to us by his own Example. This one would think should be enough to fix our Opinion, and to inspire our Practice; yet least our dull Apprehensions, or corrupt and prejudiced Nature should be still wavering, decline the Practice, and not see or not believe the Blessedness of it, he has condescended to a more *express* Encouragement, explain'd the *particular way* whereby each of those Qualifications shall render those who have them blessed, and annexed *particular Rewards* to every one of them. So that now we have no Excuse; we are called to Holiness and Virtue, and thereby to Happiness; and not only called by way of Precept and Command, but invited and encourag'd too by all the Arguments (even from Self-Interest) which can be supposed to work upon any reasonable People. But if we will still be so obstinate and foolish, *like the deaf Adder that stoppeth her ear*, that we will not hearken to the

voice of the charmer charming never so wisely; If neither the Love of Virtue, nor the Rewards of it will move us, we must thank our selves if we be uneasie and miserable in this World, lose Sight of Heaven and Happiness for ever, and spend a sad Eternity in Regret and Torment.





A PRACTICAL
EXPOSITION
OF THE
BEATITUDES.

CHAP. I.
Of POVERTY of SPIRIT.

MATT. V. 3.

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs
is the Kingdom of Heaven.*



It will be necessary upon this
Head to consider,

I. The Character of the
Persons, The *Poor in Spi-
rit* ; or what Qualifications are im-
plied in that Expression.

II.

II. The Blessing assign'd and assured to Persons so qualify'd, *The Kingdom of Heaven.*

First, The Character of the Persons here spoken of, and who they are whom we may suppose our Saviour to have intended by the *Poor in Spirit*. Some Interpreters understand this of Poverty of *Estate*, as if he had pronounced the Blessing merely upon those who are miserable and necessitous in their Condition as to the common Things in this World : And hereupon the *Romish* Church has principally founded the Monastick Life, and voluntary Poverty profess'd by Vow and Promise, with such a solemn Shew of Severity amongst them. But this Blessing cannot reasonably be taken in such an Extent : For tho' Christ our Saviour is the great Fountain of Pity and Compassion, delights to ease and gratifie the Necessities of human Nature, and the Poor as such have a particular Title to his Providence, when Piety and Faith have taught them to depend upon it, and there are other Promises in the Holy Scriptures which may encourage their Expectations in this kind ; yet as to the Blessing promised in the Text, the Poor are no further concern'd in it than

than as their Poverty may dispose them (if well and piously improved) to receive more readily that humble and self-denying Doctrine which our Saviour opened to the World ; and, like the Preaching of the *Baptist*, prepare the Minds of Men for the Belief and Practice of true Christianity. 'Tis not to be thought that *therefore* Men have larger Communications of the Grace of Christ here, and more just Assurances of eternal Glory hereafter, because they are *poor* and *low* in their outward Circumstances : For in dispensing the Blessings of his Gospel, he regards neither Poor nor Rich, any farther than by *Repentance from dead Works*, and the *Belief of Him*, they render themselves capable Objects of his Grace and Favour ; and we see, in Fact, how many indigent People there are in the World, whose Poverty, instead of qualifying them for Saints on Earth and Heirs of Heaven, is the very Occasion of their greater Wickedness, by drawing them into Distrust and Murmuring and Unbelief towards God, and Dishonesty, Violence, and other Injuries to their Neighbour. These therefore cannot be the Men to whom the *Kingdom of Heaven* (in any Sense) peculiarly belongs. But those upon whom that Blessing

ing is here entail'd are the *Poor in Spirit*; and who they are that may be properly accounted *Poor in Spirit*, will be perhaps sufficiently described in these four following Heads.

1. Such as are *humble and lowly in Spirit*, not lifted up with Pride and Vanity in the Possession of worldly Things. And I suppose the Addition of those Words [*in Spirit*] which is the distinguishing Character in the Text, is principally for this Purpose, that so the *Rich* may be capable of the Blessing and the Kingdom too, as well as others. For Christ is the *Saviour of all Men*, and has not so altered the Government of Things, as that to become his Disciples Men should necessarily quit their former State and Posture in the World. For he who is *Poor in Spirit*, tho' his Condition be honourable and rich, has nevertheless that Temper and Qualification which a poor Man is supposed to have. His Honour and Riches do not swell him to a Contempt of others. He does not *sacrifice to his own Nets*; ascribe all to his own Industry and Merit, nor look upon himself as really and substantially the better for all that Wealth and Power which he enjoys; but he reflects upon the no Desert and Title he can

1 Tim. 4.
10.

Hab. 1. 16.

can make before Almighty God. He considers the *Clay out of which he was form'd*; and that as *Job* says of them, the Rich and the Poor *shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the Worms shall cover them*; so they were both made together, and the *Lord was the Maker of them both*. He does not think himself the greater Favourite of Heaven because he possesses so much more of this World than many others do; he knows that these are not the Rewards which God reserves for those who love him. *Outward Mercies and temporal Enjoyments* are scattered by Providence, as it were with a careless Hand, to good and bad Men: For as to such Things *no Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before them*. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not, as is the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. And he considers besides, with deep Humility and Sorrow, the many Sins he is guilty of before God, and therefore whatever Wealth or Honour he makes a Figure with in the Sight of Men, he knows he is to stand or fall to another Master, and to be judged

ed at the Bar of God by other Measures. And such a Man as this is properly one of those poor in Spirit to whom the Kingdom of Heaven is promised. Riches indeed, as they are generally used, carry with them a very different Temper, and render those who possess them liable to great Temptations and Prejudices against the Force of true Religion: And for this Cause I suppose it might be that the Church did anciently require their Catechumens to profess their Renunciation of the Pumps and Vanities of the World, which are the great Enemies and Corrupters of Humility, and thereby declared that none are fit to be Members of Christ, and Subjects of his Kingdom, but such as are of humble Minds, who tho' they may enjoy many Things in the World, are not so swell'd and puff'd up with them as to value themselves thereupon. But,

1 Cor. 7. 31

2. The *Poor in Spirit* are such as are *not covetous in their Desire*, nor *penurious in the Use*, of worldly Things; who use the World as if they us'd it not, and live in it so as if they did not live upon it. The nearest to him who is so poor as to *have* nothing, is he who *desires* nothing, and uses *that* he has with *Indifference* and *Moderation*. This Man

Man remembers the Advice of holy David, *If riches encrease set not your heart upon them*; and the Reason given^{10.} for it by Solomon, *For riches make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.* He remembers that a man's life, his Safety and Happiness, consisteth not in the things which he possesseth; and therefore (as our Saviour bids him) he takes heed of and avoids all covetousness. He makes not gold his hope, nor rejoices because his wealth is great, or that his hand hath gotten much; but his Care is to use it well, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate to such as want what he enjoys, laying up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come, that he may lay hold on eternal life. He sits loose to all the Enjoyments of this World, as having laid up his Treasure in a better Place; he is not grasping in his Desires, he is not fond of his Possessions; he does not thirst for more than what he has, nor dote upon even that: For he considers that the Love of the World is the great Enemy of Religion, and the Root of all Evil, the Mother of Falshood and Oppression, Variance and Contention; whereas if Men would be but perswaded to regulate their Desires,
and

and to be poor in that respect, the Religion of Christ would have Opportunity to enter and take possession of their Hearts, the Government of the World would be easie, and Charity would cement and bind all Relations and all Societies. It is not necessary that Men be *poor*, in order to be *religious*; but it is necessary that they be *not covetous*, that their Riches do not get the Command of their *Hearts*, and they be poor at least in their *Designs*, and *Desires* of and their *Affections* to this World. This is to be *poor in Spirit*, but such a Poverty as has annexed to it the truest Riches, that of *Contentment* and *Repose*, the Communication of the Spirit of Christ, and the Rewards of eternal Glory.

3. Another Instance in the Description and Character of the *poor in Spirit*, is, That they do thankfully acknowledge the good Hand and Providence of God in what they enjoy. They look not upon themselves as Lords but Stewards, and how great soever their outward Circumstances be, their Minds are as humble and depending, their Hearts as full of Gratitude and Acknowledgement, as if they liv'd upon the daily Alms of Heaven, the Charity of good Men. They consider that God is the great Over-
ruler

ruler and Disposer of Affairs, that it is in his Power to give and to take away, to dispossess the Rich and to supply the Needy; that they are Strangers and Pilgrim sin this World, have nothing they can truly call their own, because they have every thing they enjoy from God, and not from themselves; and therefore, as the *poor Man* when he receives an Alms acknowledges the Goodness of the Giver, so he who is *poor in spirit* acknowledges the Favour and Blessing of God even in his Riches, and thankfully owns his Dependance upon him, even for *his daily bread*. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up. Both riches and honour come of him, he reigneth over all, and in his hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.

1 Sam. 2.

1 Chron.

29. 12.

4. The Fourth and Last Line in the Description of the *poor in Spirit*, is, that they are such as have a *Readiness and Disposition of Mind willingly and cheerfully to submit to a Condition of Poverty, when it shall please God to bring it upon them*. They look upon themselves in the World as all Men are apt at some times, *viz.* in Wars or great Mortalities, when they stand ready for any Event, and dispose themselves equally for

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Suffering

Suffering as for Safety. And indeed this State of Mind is very necessary for the *Disciples of Christ*: For besides the Evils and Accidents which fall upon them in common with other Men, *they* are often called to *higher Acts of Suffering*, and exposed to it upon the very

Gen. 22. 1, 2, 12. Account of their *Religion*. God tempted *Abraham* with a Command of Sacrificing his Son, that it might appear that pious Father of the Faithful had a Heart disposed sincerely to obey his Will, and submit to his Providence, tho' with the Loss of what was dearest to him in this Life. Our Saviour also has declared,

Luke 14. 26. that whosoever does not part with Father and Mother, Wife or Children, or any other Relation or Enjoyment, for his Sake and the Gospel, is not worthy to be his Follower. Which is not so to be understood as if it were necessary for all his Disciples actually to forsake those Relations, and to renounce those Enjoyments; but they frame their Hearts to such an Indifferency towards them, that if they must either neglect and omit their Duty to him, or suffer the Loss of all, they should readily submit to *Suffering*; and that as *Abraham* went out from his Country and his Friends at the Command of God, so they should disengage

engage themselves from all the Endearments, which, in that State of things, shall prove Obstructions to their Duty and their Religion. *Whosoever* Mark 8. (says our Saviour) *will come after me,* 34. *let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.* Now as Poverty is one great Instance of the Cross, and submitting chearfully to it as to the Will of God, a great degree of *self-denyal*, we must not, when it falls in our way, be offended at it; but endeavour continually to prepare our Minds for it, and set our selves to acquire that holy Strength and Fortitude which may enable us to bear it, when God shall think fit to lay that Cross upon our Shoulders. Men generally addict themselves with so much Eagerness to the gratifying their Humour and their Delight, that when it comes to the Point of *self-denyal* and *forsaking*, they are all disorder'd and passionate, look upon it as unreasonable and intollerable; they murmur at Providence, and *charge God foolishly*, and Job 1. 22. too often chuse with Demas to forsake St. Paul, their Duty and their Saviour, than this present World: Whereas if they were *poor in Spirit*, in the Sense here mention'd, they would make a wiser Choice: If they had before

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wrought themselves (as they should do) to a Readiness and Disposition to bear the Cross, they would find the Weight much lessen'd when it should be laid upon them, and say with holy *Job*, *Naked came I out of my mothers womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Job 1. 21.

II. Having thus described who are the poor in Spirit, let us next enquire into the *Kingdom of Heaven*, which is the Blessing entail'd upon them. And *this* Enquiry will divide it self into two Branches.

1. What we are to understand by the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

2. Why that Portion is assign'd to the *poor in Spirit*.

1. What we are to understand by the *Kingdom of Heaven*. And for Satisfaction to this Point we are to consider,

(1.) That in the Writings of the Evangelists it is plainly and frequently us'd for the *coming of Christ into the World*, for the *State of Grace*, and the *preaching of the Gospel*; as you may observe from that

Matth. 3. 2. of the *Baptist*, *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. And in the 13th Chapter of *St. Matthew* our Saviour delivers many Parables, which must of necessity

cessity refer to this Sense of the Kingdom of Heaven; as that of the *grain* Matth. 13. *of mustard-seed* thrown into the Earth, ³¹ which, tho' it be a small Seed of its self, does yield a very surprising and plentiful Encrease; of *Leaven* which was put Matth. 13. into three Measures of Meal, and it leaven'd the whole Lump; of a *Net* cast Matth. 13. into the Sea which brought up in it every kind of Fish, &c. All which do properly relate to the *great Progress of the Gospel* from poor and mean Beginnings, and serv'd then to animate his Disciples in the Pursuit of their Duty, in that preaching of the Christian Faith which should be crowned with such wonderful Success. But then,

(2.) By the Kingdom of Heaven is also understood the *State of Glory and Happiness in the World to come*, the Rewards and Mansions prepared by Christ for such as believe in him and obey him. And thus it is usually expounded in that Saying of his, *except your righteousness* Matth. 5. *shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes* ^{20.} *and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And more plainly in this other, *Not every one that* Matth 7. *saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter in-* ^{21.} *to the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Having thus briefly stated the Question, what we are to understand by the Kingdom of Heaven; we must enquire in the next Place,

2. Why this belongs so properly and peculiarly to the *Poor in Spirit*. *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. Theirs it is in both Senses, both the State of *Grace*, and the State of *Glory*, to them belongs the Preaching of the Gospel and the Rewards of it.

That they have a special Interest and Property in the State and Revelation of the Gospel, will appear upon these two Accounts.

(1.) Because the Disposition of their Minds is such, that they are immediately capable of receiving and entertaining all the Precepts of the Christian Doctrine; their Hearts are as it were plow'd up, and ready for the Seed, the greatest Obstacle, *viz. the World and their Affections to it*, being already conquered. The Rule and Riches of the World did, at our Saviour's coming, and do still produce in Men a Backwardness to the Self-denying Principles and Discipline of his Religion; and therefore says he, *'Tis easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the*

Matth. 19.
24.

the Kingdom of God. By the Kingdom of God is understood there the State of the Gospel, according to the former Sense; and by a *rich Man*, one with all the usual Pride and Appetites, the Prejudices and corrupt Affections of rich Men, who in such a State are by no Means capable of being Members of this Kingdom. But the Poor in Spirit, who are come to a better Temper, have broke through these Impediments; Abundance to them is in a manner the same thing as Want, they use the World as if they used it not, and therefore the Passions and Interests of this World have lost their Force upon them, can neither blind their Minds nor bend their Wills against the Law of Christ, by setting up themselves in Competition with it. The *Poor in Spirit*, let his Condition and Substance be what it will, has no uncomplying Prejudices to byass him, but receives the Gospel heartily and freely, without Design or Hypocrisie, and is prepared to embrace all the Commands of his Saviour, and to run through all the Methods of a spiritual Life. Consider him in the *first* great Line of his Description, as an *humble and lowly Man*, setting little Value upon himself: Does not this particularly qualifie him for a Christian Modesty

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deftly in all his Converfation, a Christian Obedience to his Governors, a Christian Meeknefs towards all Men, a Christian Condefcenfion to the Infirmities of his Neighbours, and to any charitable and friendly Offices for their Good, a Christian Pity towards the Afflicted, Juftice and Equity in all his Dealings, Patience under all Reproaches, Averfeneff to all Faction and Tumult, and Readinefs to forgive all Injuries, to love his Enemies, and return Good for Evil, which are the diftinguifhing Characters of the Religion of Chrift? Consider him under the *fecond* Head, as one who is neither *covetous* in the *Defire of more*, nor *penurious* in the *Ufe of what he has*; and does not, this peculiarly difpofe him to that abfolute Contentment with his Condition, whatever it is, which Christianity requires of him? and make him peculiarly averfe to all the vile Arts of Violence and Oppreffion, Fraud and Cheating, Diffimulation, Flattery and Lying for Advantage, which the fame Christianity forbids him? Does it not prepare him for that generous open-handed Liberality to the Poor, and that good-natur'd Hofpitality to his Neighbours, enjoin'd him by the Christian Gospel? And if we confider him in the *third* Branch of his Character

ter, as *thankfully owning his Dependance upon God* for all he enjoys; does it not prepare his Mind for those exalted Acts of Piety and Devotion, Love and Gratitude to the great God who made him, the blessed Saviour who redeem'd him, and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies him, which our holy Religion calls upon him for? And is not such a Gratitude the best, the strongest and most natural Principle of that sincere and universal Obedience which is requir'd of every Christian? Look upon him under the *fourth Qualification*, as one who is ready to *part with* all he enjoys whenever God shall call for it by his Providence; and particularly to suffer the Loss of all things to promote the Glory of God, and to preserve the Integrity of a good Conscience: And does not all this answer to that Trust and Faith in God, that firm Reliance upon him, that dutiful and meek Submission to him, that Heavenly-mindedness and Indifference to the Things of this World, that fervent Zeal for God's Honour, and close Adherence to the Religion of Christ, which our Christianity so much insists upon? And does it not especially fortifie us for that Self-denial which is the Life and Spirit of a Christian,

and

and for all those Hardships and Sufferings from a wicked World, which Christ and his Apostles testifie to be the Lot of all who will in earnest cleave to him? And thus I think it is evident, that such a Poverty of Spirit as has been described, directly and necessarily qualifies Men for embracing the Christian Religion, and therefore the Kingdom of Heaven may be properly said to be theirs in the *first* Sense. But,

(2.) It is so again in the same Sense of the Phrase, as this Poverty in Spirit not only disposes for all other Parts of our Religion, but is it self one of the special and peculiar Virtues of the Gospel. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, because they are gone a great Way in it, and possess one of the brightest Ornaments and Beauties of it. Upon which Account it is that our Saviour so frequently and importunately recommends this Virtue to his Followers; and therefore at one time setting a Child before them, affirms, that if ever they enter into the Kingdom of God, they must be like such a one; which is as much as to say, that the Kingdom of God consists chiefly in the Exercise of this Grace; for the main Lines and Features of it are very lively represented in Infants, who are so happy in their Ignorance

Matt. 18.
3, 4.

norance of, and little Interests in the World, that they may be truly said to be *poor in Spirit*. And at another time he presses them to it by his own Example, *I am among you, says he, as one that serveth.* Luke 22. 27. And again, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your Souls.* Matth. 11. 29. By these and several other Passages he discovers the high Esteem and Importance of this Virtue, and the great Ornament and Beauty of it. *Of such, says he, is the Kingdom of Heaven:* Matth. 19. 14. The State of the Gospel is made up chiefly of the Poor in Spirit, they are more eminently his Disciples, they bear his own Badge and Cognizance, the very Spirit with which he came into the World, and all along convers'd in it. And therefore upon this Account also the Poor in Spirit have a particular Interest and Property in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus then it is you see in the first Sense of this Kingdom; and so it is in the *second*, when we take it for the Glory and Happiness of the World to come. For,

(1.) The State of Grace is but the Beginning and Infancy of the State of Glory,

ry, and that of Glory is but the State of Grace in its full Perfection, Strength and Beauty. So that if the Poor in Spirit have a particular Property in the one, they have it also in the other, if they have it in the Preaching and Practice of the Gospel, they have it also in the Rewards. But then,

(2.) Christ has that special Regard to this Excellence, that he rewards it not only in the gross with others, but particularly and by it self. To Humility is always assign'd throughout the Scriptures the distinguishing Reward of *Exaltation*. *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble and meek. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* And humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Still Exaltation is the peculiar Recompence of this Grace; and that, as I suppose, with an Eye to the *next* Life, rather than to *this*; for though the Providence of God does sometimes remarkably bring it about in this present World, that the poor in Spirit are preferred and honoured, yet it is often otherwise; and indeed if it were only *here*, the Recompence would be but little, *for the things that are seen are temporal*, short-lived and transitory, but

Luke 1.

52.

Psalms 147.

6.

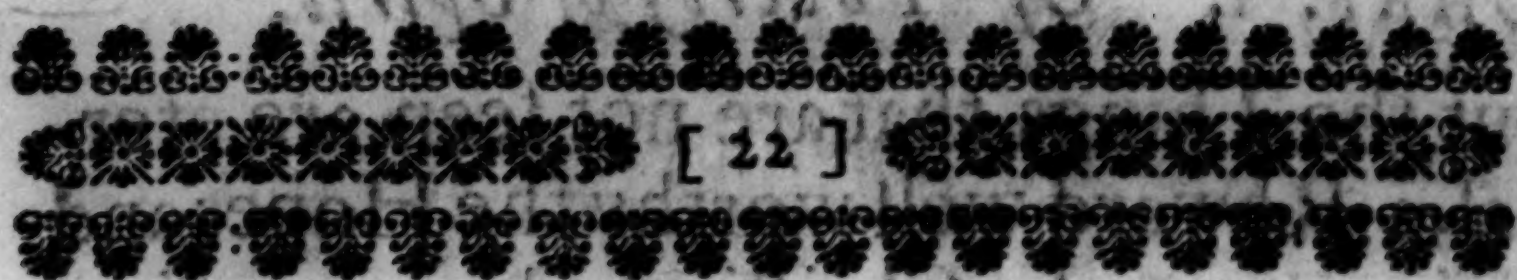
Luke 14.

11.

1 Pet. 5.6.

but the Things that are not seen are eternal, a Reward well worthy the Hopes and Enjoyment of a Christian. And therefore whether they see the Accomplishment of the Promise here or not, they shall certainly enjoy it in the World to come, where it will be of most Happiness and Advantage to them: For God has blessed them, and they shall be blessed.

**CHAP.**



[22]

CHAP. II.

Of MOURNING.

MATT. V. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall
be comforted.*



IN the Close of the foregoing Chapter, discoursing upon the first of these Beatitudes, it was shewn, that Exaltation is the special Recompence assign'd to *Humility* or *Poverty in Spirit*; now in this second, *Comfort* is the peculiar Blessing promis'd to the *Mourner*. We cannot but observe from hence, that the All-wise and merciful God not only delights to bless his Creatures, but contrives, as it were, to do it *in the most proper and obliging Manner*; to adapt his *Rewards* to the Nature of our *Virtues*, and suit his *Benefits* to our *Necessities*: For what can be a more acceptable Blessing to the *Mourner* than *Comfort*? What can be a more suitable Reward to *Humility* than *Exaltation*?

Yet

Yet that we may not deceive ourselves, in applying those general Words in the Text to *all* sorts of Grief and Sorrow, without any Difference or Restraint; let us,

First, Enquire what our Saviour could be supposed to mean by *Mourning*. For if we take it in the full Extent of Nature, and in the Compass of an human Passion, that is, as it is describ'd in general, a Trouble or Disturbance of the Soul occasion'd by any present Evil, it may be so ill manag'd as to become *irregular* and *sinful*, and to deserve *Punishment* from God, rather than expect a *Blessing*: And therefore we cannot understand it here in such a Latitude. But as all the other Qualifications or Circumstances bless'd by our Saviour in this Sermon are apparently either excellent Graces and Ornaments of the *Christian Religion*, or have an immediate Reference to it, and have the Blessing annexed to them *as such*, we must consider the Mourning here blessed, as only taking in what is honourable and useful in it to *Religion*, and bounded within the proper Limits which are allowable by *the Laws of Christ*, and qualify'd every other way as *they* prescribe.

Accord-

Accordingly, the *Mourners* to whom our Lord has promis'd *Comfort* in this Text, are such as mourn in a *religious Manner*, or as St. *Paul's* Expression is, ^{2 Cor. 7. 11.} *after a godly sort*, so as that it may appear to be more the Issue of Regeneration than Nature, or at least to be under the Government and Regulation of Christian Principles. And that it may be so, their Mourning must be (1.) sincere and real; (2.) it must be religiously employ'd, and upon spiritual Objects; or, (3.) if the Occasion of it be purely *temporal*, the Troubles and Sufferings only of this World, it must be moderated and govern'd by the *Rules of Religion*.

First then it must be *sincere* and *real*, proceeding from the *Heart*, and not from any of those little Arts of Disguise and Affectation, which are so commonly used to deceive our selves and others, and with which Men foolishly imagine (or seem at least to do so) that they can deceive God too. For Grief is represented by such Expressions in holy Scripture, as do necessarily suppose it has its proper Seat and Principle within. ^{Psal. 22. 16.} So the *Psalmist*, *My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels*. And again, ^{Psal. 109. 22.} *My heart is wounded within*

within me, my soul is sore vexed. Jeremiah also that true Mourner, My bowels are troubled for Ephraim; I am in distress, my bowels are troubled, and my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled, &c. If we be not thus *in earnest* in our Grief, 'tis all to no purpose, be the Object what it will; all the sad Postures of the Body (without this inward Sorrow) are no more acceptable to God, than the hanging down of a Flower upon its Stalk when it is over-pressed with Dew. But as indeed when our own worldly Crosses give us the Affliction, it is not to be doubted but our Concern is real, we do not use to be Hypocrites in Sorrow upon such an Occasion; the only Danger which makes this Caution of *Sincerity* needful, is in the Case of *Spiritual* Grief, and *Repentance* towards God, or the Concern we ought to shew for the *Sins* or the *Calamities* of others. And yet as to this last, a *compassionate Temper* is so natural, so much more easie than a *penitent Sorrow* for our own Sins, or a *religious Grief of Mind* for Sins committed by other People, that here I must lay the chief stress of my Argument, and press Sincerity with the greatest Earnestness. 'Tis here, in
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the Case of Repentance, that we are most apt to impose upon our selves and upon those about us, with a Remorse or Sorrow, which, tho' it is more than is usual with us, is not effectually what it should be. It was a sad Complaint which God made of his own People the

Isa. 29. 13. *Jews, that they drew near to him with their mouths, and honoured him*

Isa. 58. 5. *with their lips, bowed down their heads as a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under them, gave him good Words and pretended to be mighty Penitent, when nevertheless their HEARTS were far from him.* And doubtless the Complaint may justly be renew'd of too many, who, not being always able to resist their Consciences, are stung sometimes with a Remorse, pretend a Sorrow for their Sins, and a great Sense and Trouble for what they have done amiss, confess it, and condemn themselves for it; and yet 'tis such a kind of Sorrow as too evidently consists with the Love and Liking of the Sin, which they again embrace at the Return of the next Temptation; that is, it is a false and hypocritical Sorrow: Tho' perhaps themselves may think it inward and real enough in the Design, it proves not so in the Event; for nothing can be sincere Repentance but that which not only

only *laments Sin past*, but also teaches us a perfect Hatred, and a careful avoidance of it for the Time to come. In the Trial of our Religious Sorrow therefore, let us enquire how our Souls and Consciences are affected. Do we offer to God (not a few faint Wishes or dissembled Tears, but) *the Sacrifice of a broken Spirit, and a contrite Heart?* Do we *consider* our Sins when we *confess* them? And are our *Souls* affected, our *Hearts* and *Resolutions* bent against them when we say we bewail them? If so, we shall enjoy the Comfort promised in the Text, and not otherwise: For let us not deceive our selves, *God* Gal. 6. 7. *is not to be mocked* or imposed upon. *The heart is deceitful above all things* Jer. 17. 9. *and desperately wicked: But the Lord* 10. *searcheth the heart and trieth the reins,* Heb. 4. 13. *neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* The same is to be apply'd to the Concern we shew for the Sins of others; it must be deep and real, proceeding not from a slight Formality, or Affectation of appearing better than other Men, much less from a Spirit of Pride and Censoriousness; there must be nothing of the *Pharisee* in

in it, but it must be the Issue of a well rooted Love of God, and Zeal for his Honour, and hearty Detestation of all Sins, and an affectionate Charity to the Souls of Men, if ever we expect our Mourning upon this Occasion should be blessed with Comfort.

I will now proceed to the *Second* Limitation of Mourning in the Sense of this Text. It must be *religiously employ'd*, and upon *spiritual Objects*. We are not to make our selves uneasy for the want of Riches, or Honours, or other *worldly* Enjoyments, but for those Wants which affect our better and immortal Part, our *Souls*. We are not to throw away our Grief upon what our selves or any Body else has done against our secular Interest; but what displeases God, obstructs us in our Way to Heaven, and darkens our eternal Hopes.

To state more particularly the proper Objects of that Mourning which is indeed Religious, we will consider them in these following Heads.

I. The first is the *Want* of that *unsinning Purity and Righteousness* wherewith the first Man *Adam* was adorn'd in Paradise, and in which all After-Generations had been born, if he by his Disobedience had not forfeited and lost it.
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It is a great Aggravation of the Unhappiness of Mankind, that they did once bear a better and more glorious Character, the Image and Superscription of God himself, and such a Perfection of Being as that they might look up to their Creator with an holy Joy and Confidence, and look into themselves with that Peace and Satisfaction of Mind which is the Effect of Innocence, when Sin was not yet enter'd into the World, nor Misery and Death by Sin, but God and Man were in perfect good Agreement, and it was as natural to *obey* and *love* our Maker, as it is now to *offend* and *dread* him. But alas! that Crown is fallen from our Heads, those Robes of original Purity and Righteousness were torn to pieces by that careless and unhappy Couple from whose Loins we all descend. Evident it is that we carry about us the Seeds and Principles of Sin and Disobedience, which improv'd by our malicious Enemy the Devil, and fed by ill Examples in the World, are daily breaking out into Rebellion against God; and these *have separated between our God and us*, and have set him at an angry distance from us, as the Sense of Guilt has made us also *afraid*, and the Love of Sin *unwilling* to approach

Isa. 59.2.

approach him. The Consideration of this should be a perpetual Spring of Tears and Sorrow, and that not only upon our own Accounts, but in behalf of *all Mankind*, who are expos'd in the same Nakedness and Dishonour.

2. Another thing which enters deep into the Heart of a religious Mourner is a Consequence of the last, namely, the *want of Power and Sufficiency*, (even in the best of Men) as to any Strength of their own, to come up to those *more moderate Terms* which God has now establish'd in his Son Jesus Christ for our *Recovery*; and those are Faith, Repentance, and Amendment, to be heartily sorry for our Offences past, to implore and hope for Pardon through the alone Merits of our Saviour's Sacrifice, and to govern our selves for the future by the Law of God. But tho' these Terms are so merciful and easie in the Nature and the Reason of them, yet our old Corruption still so clogs us, the World has so long usurp'd upon our Affections, our secular Interests and our Passions do so often blind us, and a Course of sinning so fatally tend to harden us, that it is not without great Difficulty and many sad Interruptions that *we can apply our selves* to believe, repent,

pent, and change our evil Customs for a Life of Virtue and Obedience, nor without the Assistance of God's powerful Grace that we can at length *perform* this. And because there is such a Defect of Power in Men to do these things as they ought to be done, the religious Mourner reflects upon himself with Sorrow, and his Heart is troubled within him. He sees the Excellency and Reasonableness of the Law of God; that a constant uniform Obedience to it is his truest Interest as well as Duty, his greatest Honour and Perfection, and his utmost Happiness; but he finds, by sad Experience, that *in our flesh dwells no good thing.* Our *Understandings* are short and defective in the things of God, involved in Prejudices and Mistakes; our *Wills* are byass'd and perverted to Evil by Habit and Inclination, or chain'd down from Good by that aguish Listlessness which hangs upon them in such Matters; our *Memories* are not only weak, retaining the Images of Evil, and the Notion of worldly Things, and the Arts of Gain and Profit, but are very faithless and unheeding of the Treasures of Divine Wisdom and Knowledge, the Precepts of God's Law by which our Lives are to be

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govern'd, and the repeated Benefits and Blessings of God by which he daily encourages us to Obedience. God requires us to love him with all our Soul and with all our Strength; but alas! how hard it is not to love the World and our selves above him! so much do *our Senses* and the Charms of outward things debauch us. He has placed our Consciences as a Guard to keep us to our Duty, and admonish and accuse us when we do amiss; but either, like *Saul* upon the Mountains, they are asleep with the Spear stuck by them; or else, like *Lazarus* at the Gates of the rich Man, their Cries and Clamours are not heard, for the Noise of the rude Appetites and Desires within. And is not all this just Matter for Sorrow and sad Thoughts?

3. A third thing which gives him Cause of Mourning is the Effect of this Corruption in so many publick Instances. For from hence it is, from the general Prevalence of weak Understandings and unruly Passions, that in all Ages there have risen up Errors and Heresies, to pervert the Truth, and break the Peace and Order of the Church, and stir up Difference and Dissention; which by degrees has brought Men to place
almost

almost their whole Religion in the Practice of what is most condemn'd by it, *bitter envying and strife*, the chusing Jam. 3. 14. little Sides and Parties, adhering to 15. them with a Zeal inflam'd to Faction, and pursuing with a fierce and furious Heat all such as differ from them: A Temper, which if we will believe the Apostle) *descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*, and unworthy of the Christian Name. If therefore we would learn a just and acceptable Argument for Mourning, let *this* amongst other sink deep into our Hearts, that the Church of Christ is a broken and disunited Body, the *peculiar* Tit. 2. 14. people whom *he purchased to himself to be zealous in good works*, is become zealous only for particular Parties and Opinions, (and those sometimes of little Consequence, not worth contending for;) while that *Peace and Charity* our Saviour left behind him as a distinguishing Mark of his Disciples is now hardly visible, that one would think there were no such thing as a Body of Christians in the World.

4. The Fourth Cause of Mourning and Sorrow to a religious Mind is *Sin*; and this may be consider'd under a double Character; either the Sin of *com-*
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mon Infirmity, which the best Men are too often guilty of; or wilful Sins and great Apostacies from God and Goodness, which strike at the very Life and Being of Religion. I call those *Sins of Infirmity*, which proceed from the Weakness and Imperfection of our Graces, supposing nevertheless the sincere Devotion of our *Wills* to God, and a *general* Watchfulness (tho' not so strict and constant as it should be) against offending. And I call those wilful Sins and Apostacies from God and Goodness, which proceed from the *Strength and uncontrolled Dominion of Sin in our Hearts*, and that *willing* Slavery and Subjection which too many are under to it by sinful Habits, and *indulging* themselves in Practices contrary to the Law of God. Now *first*, as to *Sins of Infirmity*; the Weakness of our Faith, the Coldness of our Love to God, and of our Zeal for his Honour and Glory; our Backwardness to spiritual Duties, our wretched Wandrings and Distractions in them, our too great Fondness for the World and the Business or Enjoyments of it; our Impatience under Sufferings and Contradiction, and the first (tho' never so little) giving way to blasphemous, murmuring, lustful, ambitious,

ous,

ous, or other sinful Thoughts, and many other the like to these, which through the yet unconquer'd Force, perhaps of Custom, or Education, or Prejudice, through Ignorance or want of Consideration, through Idleness or Business, or some other Accident which throws us off our Guard, the best Men are frequently betray'd into, against the general Purpose of their Minds——they are certainly fit Objects of Sorrow and sad Reflection in us all. For Regeneration does not immediately purge us from all the Corruptions of that unhappy Nature we were born with, but only works in us a settled practical Dislike of Sin, and Love of Holiness and Virtue; yet so as the Remains of natural Corruption are still left to be *Thorns in our sides, and pricks in our eyes*, to humble us before God, and keep us in the daily Practice of Repentance, that we may *work out* Phil. 2. 12. *our Salvation with fear and trembling.* The religious Mourner therefore, considering the Excellency of God, and the infinite Reason there is to believe and trust in him, to love and serve and worship him with the utmost Zeal and Application, cannot but be deeply concern'd when he reflects upon his own unworthy Coldness and Deficiency in
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any of these. He considers the Law of God as a perfect Rule of Life, a fair and exact Copy set him, and by the Authority of a Master whom he has the highest Obligations to obey: It is his earnest Desire to live up to this Rule, to write exactly after this Copy; and when he observes how far he falls short of it, how often he offends, and that every Offence (tho' it be through Weakness or Infirmary) is still a Deviation from the Law of God, he cannot but lay it seriously to Heart. He is sensible that these Sins, however inconsiderable other Men may think them, darken his Prospect of a better Life, increase the Particulars of the Account he is to make to God, and give the Devil fresh Matter of Accusation against him, and fresh Encouragements and Advantages farther to attack him, he cannot but look upon himself with Grief and Mourning; and tho' he cannot number them in his Confessions, he will yet confess them in their Numbers, with a *general* (but a *true* and *deep*) Repentance.

As to *wilful Sins*, or Sins of great Apostacy from God and Goodness; such as Blasphemy, prophane Cursing and Swearing, Drunkenness, Lewdness, Contempt of God, or ridiculing Religion
and

and good Men, Oppression, Injustice, Murder, Lying, Cheating, and such other horrid and notorious Miscarriages as are inconsistent with the Life and Being of Christianity, without as great and severe a Repentance, I need not surely prove that *these* are Objects of religious Sorrow: For if we grieve not for them, and very deeply too, 'tis at our utmost Peril; we can hope for no Pardon, and Peace, and Reconciliation with God, no Happiness and Glory, nor any thing but eternal Torments in the Life to come. But then, to both these, there may be added that which is very becoming a Christian Spirit to consider; and that is *Mourning for the Sins of others*. For understanding the Church to be a Society of Persons, engaged upon the same accounts *to be holy in all manner of Conversation*, and expecting the same Rewards for their Obedience, and exposed to the same *Terrors of the Lord* for Disobedience unrepented of; it is but reasonable that where any appear to fall short of their Duty, and consequently of the Reward, the whole Body should have a Fellow-feeling of it, and be concern'd in pure Compassion and Good-nature for it. The *Psalmist* says of himself that, *Rivers of waters ran* Psal. 119.
down 136.

down his eyes because men kept not God's laws. Our Saviour and his Apostles were troubled at the Unbelief of obstinate Hearers. And farther to shew how acceptable this Practice is to God, let me recommend to your Consideration what the Lord said in the Vision of Ezekiel, *Go through the midst of the City, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.* And indeed Religion, as well as Humanity, requires this of us; for we should look upon Sin (whether in our selves or others) as a Dishonour to Christ and Christianity; should grieve for it (wherever we find it) as the Violation of an holy and excellent Law, and the Stains and Blemish of that Body which Christ *is to present holy and blameless unto God.*

Ezek. 9.4.
Col. 1. 22.
Eph. 5. 27.

I come now to the *Third* Limitation of Mourning in my Text, to make it religious and entitle it to a Blessing, which is, that tho' the Occasion of it be purely *temporal*, the Troubles and Sufferings we meet with in the Affairs of common Life, it must be *moderated* and *govern'd* by the *Rules of Religion*. Christianity pretends not (like the vain and pom-

pompous Doctrine of the *Stoicks*) to forbid us an human Sense of Evils, to root out of us *all Concern*, and tie us down to perfect *Indifference* with respect to Pain or Poverty, Reproach, or Loss of Friends, or Damage in our Estates, or any other Calamities incident to us in this uncertain World, but teaches us to bear with Moderation and improve them well. For natural Passions are not in themselves sinful; but they must be kept under *proper Qualifications and Measures*, to render them decent and allowable in a Christian. And,

I. The Mourning of a Christian in the Case of suffering must be *calm* and *moderate*, not flying out into ranting Expostulations, Storms and Fury. 'Tis a Vanity in most Sufferers, (proceeding from an over-great Fondness of themselves) that they suppose their Sufferings greater than they are, and are apt to imagine that no Body's Case is so hard and grievous as their own; and this is the Excuse they make for their Impatience under Sufferings: Whereas the Truth is, they are weak and peevish, and have not obtain'd that Mastery over their Passions which Reason and Religion well attended to would give them.

them. And this assuredly makes their Yoke the heavier: For Experience shews that things are easie or troublesome according to the measure of Strength and Power which they have who endure them.

2. This Mourning should not fowr them into *hard thoughts of God, or murmuring against him.* For he will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God. The Blessings we enjoy are not bestowed upon us for any Merit of ours, but are the pure Effects of his Bounty, the Gift of his Providence, and there is no Wrong done if he take away the Blessing which he gave, and which perhaps we have abused, or been unthankful for: For shall he not do what he will with his own? And if he lays Affliction upon us, yet as he is our Sovereign Lord we ought not to dispute it with him. *Who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?* The Christian Sufferer therefore tempers his Sorrow with a due Submission to the Will of God, and follows the Example of his Saviour, when he pray'd, *If it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as*

Job 34.23.

Rom. 9.
20.

Matth. 26.
39.

CHAP. II. Of Mourning.

41

as thou wilt: And when he check'd his forward Disciple for attempting to rescue him from the Jews; with this, The Cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it? John. 18. 11.

3. This Mourning or Sense of Grief for our Afflictions, ought never to go so far as to put us upon *unlawful* or *unwarrantable* Methods to get free from them. Honest Endeavours we may use, for Christianity allows them: But in the Use of these we must rest contented, and with Patience and Submission wait for their Success from God, or for Deliverance otherwise by his Hand, not giving way to the least Thought of violent, dishonest, or unworthy Measures.

It will be proper here to add, that not only the Calamities which befall *our selves*, or those of our own Family and Relations which have an immediate Interest in our Concern, but the Sufferings of *others* also, may and ought to be lamented by us. The common Ties of Humanity oblige to this, and Christianity is not wanting to confirm whatever is generous and good in human Nature.

Remember them in bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being your selves also in the Body, liable to the same Misfortunes which they suffer. Heb. 13. 3.

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suffer. By this Text we see that Mourning for the Afflictions of others is pre-scrib'd by our Religion, and therefore falls within the Character of that Sorrow which has the Promise of Comfort from our Saviour.

II. We come now, *Secondly*, to consider the Blessing, that Comfort promis'd to the religious Mourner. In doing which we will run through the several Objects of Christian Sorrow propos'd before, and see what Comfort is provided for us by Christ in every of those Instances.

(1.) As to the Loss or Want of that *unsinning Purity and Righteousness* which *Adam* had, the Distance this has bred between God and us, and the Fears and Backwardness in us to approach him, arising from a Sense of his most perfect Holiness, and of our own Depravity and Guilt; Christ has provided Comfort for us.

1. As he himself has in some measure repaired the Disgrace of our Nature, by *becoming Man* (the Second *Adam* as he is call'd,) and in that Nature fulfilling all Righteousness and the whole Will of God with an unsinning Innocence. It is some Comfort to a Man, that tho' he cannot in *his own Person* attain to any great Estate or Quality in the World, yet

yet some of his Family and Relations have, his Blood is ennobled by the Honour it enjoys in them, their Wealth is both a Credit and a Relief to him. And thus, tho' *we* indeed are miserably defective in Righteousness, decayed and fallen from the Innocence our Nature once enjoy'd, into a wretched State of Corruption and Depravity; there is one of our own Line we still may boast of, a Man like our selves, the Man *Christ* ^{2 Cor. 5.} *Jesus*, who is entirely free from all ^{21.} Taint of Sin.

2. Even we our selves, if we take Care to live so as the Gospel has pre- ^{2 Pet. 1. 4.} scribed to us, shall, when we come to ^{1 John 3. 2.} Heaven, be also perfectly purify'd from all that Corruption which we now lament, and be for ever restor'd to that unsinning Purity we long for. And,

3. Christ as our Mediator has made up the Breach between God and us. *In* ^{Eph. 3. 12.} *him we have boldness and access with confidence; are freed from the Spirit of* ^{Rom. 8. 15.} *bondage, and have received the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father. We have Boldness to enter into the holi- ^{Heb. 10.} est by the blood of Jesus, and therefore ^{19, 22.} may draw near to God, in full assurance of Faith, without those servile Fears and Trembling which are the Effects of our*

Original Guilt, if we come but with a true Heart, a sincere and honest Mind.

And all these, tho' I shall not here enlarge upon them, are surely very full and very proper Comforts, with respect to that first Object of religious Mourning.

(2.) The *Second*, which was the want of Power and Sufficiency in our selves *to come up to the Terms of the new Covenant in Christ Jesus, to believe, repent, and obey the Law of God* for the future, has also that which may be a suitable Comfort in this following Consideration; that Christ by the Merit of his Sufferings has obtained for us the Assistance of divine Grace, the Gift of the holy Spirit of God to help our Infirmities; by which Spirit we are *strengthened with might in the inner man*; we are regenerated and born anew, with new Principles and Seeds of Life, with fresh Powers and Faculties for the Service of God, so that tho' we be weak in our selves, through him we may be able to do all things: His Grace is sufficient for us, his strength is made perfect in our weakness. And that which is particularly observable to this Purpose, is, that this holy Spirit of God is promised by Christ under the exprefs Term of a Comforter.

(3.) As

(3.) As to the *Third*, the publick Divisions and Breach of Charity, the Heats and Factions that prevail so lamentably in the Church of God, we have this to comfort us, that tho' even some good Men may disagree with too much Warmth and Passion in their Opinions here, the Church Triumphant in Heaven (and they when they come to be Members of it there) shall be in perfect Peace, and Love, and Unity; and as our Understandings shall be then enlarged, our Charity shall be so too. And as to the Disturbance of the Church in general, by such Divisions in this present State of things, we may be the better satisfy'd by this, that God knows how to bring Good out of Evil, and first or last he will be glorify'd in all.

(4.) A *Fourth* Occasion of religious Sorrow are our *Sins of Infirmary*; but as to these, it is undoubtedly a great and sufficient Comfort to consider, that where they are sincerely disallow'd and strove against, they shall not be imputed to us to our Condemnation. For Christ has obtained for us, not only the Gift of the Holy Spirit to assist us in our Christian Warfare, but the Acceptance also of what that Holy Spirit works in us, tho' it be not so compleat in this Life as it

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shall

shall be in the next. We are called in-
 Matth. 5. deed to *perfection in holiness* and in
 48. *every good work*, but we fall short of it
 in numberless Instances, we are liable to
 many Weaknesses and Disorders, to
 many Escapes and Errors; and if all
 these were to be remember'd against us,
 we could hope for no Deliverance from
 the Wrath of God; if he were strict
 Psal. 130. to *mark iniquities who could stand? but*
 3, 4. *there is mercy with him that he may be*
 Isai. 42. 3. *feared. He will not break the bruised*
reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He
will accept of honest and sincere En-
deavours, and where we unwillingly
fall short of Perfection, our Surety shall
make it up in our Accounts with God.

(5.) In the *Fifth Case*, that of *willful,*
gross and heinous Sins, our Comfort is,
 that even *these* shall be forgiven upon
 a true Repentance and Amendment.
 Ezek. 18. *When the wicked man turneth away*
 27. *from his wickedness that he hath com-*
mitted, and doeth that which is lawful
and right he shall save his Soul alive;
 Isai. 1. 18. *tho' his sins be as scarlet they shall be*
white as snow; tho' they be red like crim-
son, they shall be as wooll. And these
comfortable Promises are purchas'd for
 1 Tim. 1. *us by Christ, who came into the World*
 15. *to save even the chief of Sinners, and*
 through

through the Merit of his Sufferings and Death has procur'd a Pardon for them. 'Tis true, the obstinate and harden'd Sinner can expect no Comfort, the Gospel of Christ designs him none, but the repenting Sinner may; and what more proper Comfort can he have, than the Assurance of being receiv'd to Mercy? But this is not all the Encouragement and Support he has under the Discipline of a severe Repentance, for through the Power of Christ working in him, by his Holy Spirit implanting new Principles, and an opposite Inclination to that of Sin, (which is at large discours'd of by St. *Paul* in his sixth Chapter to the *Romans*,) *the body of Sin shall be destroyed*, the Iron Scepter of that Tyrant broke, it shall no longer *have Dominion over him*, except he tamely and voluntarily submit himself to a second Slavery under it. It will be solely his own Fault if Sin have any Empire or Command within; for Grace sufficient is promised him (if he will faithfully use it) to preserve his Freedom. And surely a just Sense of this must needs inspire him with exceeding Joy and Comfort. Rom. 6. 6.

(6.) The next Occasion of Grief to a religious Mourner, was the *Sins of others*;

thers; and in this Case also, Comfort is provided for him. For as there are many wicked Men about us who dishonour God, and break his Laws in a very insolent and provoking manner; so, on the other hand, there are some good ones, who are as the Salt of the Earth, to preserve it from a total Corruption. Had *Sodom* and *Gomarrab* enjoyed but ten such righteous Persons as just *Lot* within their Walls, *who dwelling there*, mourned for their Iniquities, and *vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*, the Flames from Heaven had not consumed them, but they might have stood perhaps and flourished to this Hour. It is some farther Comfort too, that notwithstanding *Vice* prevails so generally in Point of Practice, yet Virtue has not lost its Reputation even with wicked Men themselves, who cannot but *commend* and *secretly approve* the good and virtuous, the just, the merciful, the meek, the sober Man. Another Satisfaction the religious Mourner has, (and 'tis a very great one) the Testimony of his own good Conscience, bearing witness within him of the Work and Power of God's Grace, which has enclined him to such an Abhorrence and Detestation

station of Sin, that he is not able to look upon it in others without Grief and Trouble: For this shews his Love of God to be sincere and generous, his Sense of Religion rooted in his Judgment and Affections, as well as Interest, and that he hates *Sin as Sin* where-ever he finds it; and all this is a happy Argument to him of *his own Integrity*.

(7.) Much might be said upon the last Head of Temporal Sufferings, either as they affect our selves, or other Men; but I shall contract it into as little room as may be; premising only this, that in *both these Cases* the same Considerations will be a Support and Comfort to us.

I. Then let the Suffering be what it will, we are to consider God as infinitely Wise and Good, and *ordering all things for the best*. The Sufferings of this World are many times not so much a Punishment, as a charitable Design to us to draw us off * from Sin and bring us to Repentance, || to humble us, to wean us † from the World, to try our Faith and Trust ‡ in God, to improve us in all Virtue and Obedience * to him, and to forward our own real Advantage at length, tho' we do not see at present into the secret Springs of Provi-

* Job 36.8.

9, 10.

|| 2 Cor. 12.

7.

† 2 Cor. 4.

17, 18.

‡ Jam. 1.

2, 3.

* Psal. 119.

71.

Providence by which it may be brought about; as in the Case of † *Joseph*, and many other Instances, *for all things work together for good to them that love God*; and therefore tho' the religious Mourner *sows in tears*, 'tis with a Confidence that *he shall reap in joy*. But

2. Suppose it be by way of *Punishment* we suffer, it is to be remember'd by way of Comfort that this *Correction* is to make us wiser and better, and to prevent the eternal Punishment in Hell. And 'tis to be considered also, that whatsoever we may suffer here, 'tis *less than our Iniquities deserve*. We may be thankful that our Lives are left us, thankful for any Suffering on this side Death and Eternity. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?*

3. Lastly, The religious Mourner ought to restrain his Sorrow by the Hope and Expectation of a future State. That one Reflexion of St. Paul's, that *the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*, is capable of working in a considerate Mind more Joy and Satisfaction, than all the Pressures of the World can trouble and torment us. To a Man who stedfastly believes

believes the Immortality of his Soul, and the eternal Glory of the World to come, no other Argument need be urged for Comfort in the midst of all his Afflictions. In the Revelation of this, and the Assurance of it upon such Conditions as the Gospel tenders it, Christ has done more to comfort us, than all the Malice of Earth and Hell can do to grieve us. *With these Words* therefore, *viz.* These Promises, this Revelation, *comfort your selves and one another;* and state but the Case aright betwixt Eternity and threescore Years, or say it be somewhat more, and you will find in all Reason that the future World should weigh down the present. And thus we have done with the Second of the Beatitudes, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*





CHAP. III.

Of MEEKNESS.

MATT. V. 5.

*Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit
the Earth.*



IN discoursing upon this Text,
the most easie and natural
Method will be that which
we have taken in the two
former Chapters,

First, To describe the Virtue, and
consequently the Persons blessed ; and,

Secondly, To explain the Promise
made to it and them, or in other Words,
to consider and apply the Blessing.

First, To describe *the Virtue, Meek-
ness* ; and consequently the Persons
blessed under that Character. Meek-
ness may be described in general, to
be

be that Quietness and Gentleness of Mind which issues not from any Weakness of the Faculties, or meerly from a calm Constitution of Blood and Spirits, but from the strength of Prudence and the power of Religion. It is a great Mistake in many People, who judge themselves possessed of Meekness *as a Virtue*, when it is no more than the Result of an undiscerning or inconsiderate Mind, not capable of being affected with Passion, for want of Judgment to apprehend the Nature of Things. Such Persons are not properly *meek*, but thoughtless and insensible. Others fall into the like Mistake, by presuming upon the Mildness and Softness of their natural Tempers, and these are also not properly to be accounted meek (in the Sense of this Text) because it proceeds from *Constitution*, not from *Principle*, but the right Character of them is *tender* and *good-natured*. Yet this last I freely own to be a valuable Endowment, and such a Mind is certainly the most apt and fruitful Soil for receiving and improving the Seeds of this Virtue, *Christian Meekness*.

But we must enter deeper into the Description of such an extensive Virtue, and consider it in the several Objects towards

towards which it may be exercised; and the several ways of expressing it.

Meekness is a Duty in our Conduct,

I. Towards God, and

II. Towards Man.

First then, 'Tis requisite that we be meek towards God; and that with respect both to the *Revelation* of his *Will*, and to the Methods of his *Providence*.

I. In the Revelation of the Will of God, we must consider what we are directed to *believe*, and what we are enjoin'd to *practise*; and in each of these we shall see Occasion for the Exercise of this Grace of Meekness.

(I.) As to that part of the Revelation of the Will of God which directs us what we are to *believe*, there are some dark and unconceivable Mysteries in it, which as it was not in the Power of human Understanding to *contrive* or to *find out*, so neither is it forward to *entertain* them when *they are revealed*:

As the Trinity of Persons in one Godhead, the Co-eternity of God the Son with God the Father, the real Conjunction or Union of the Divine and Human

man Nature in Christ, the Doctrine of his Sacrifice for us upon the Cross, the Resurrection of the Dead, &c. There are also several strange Accounts given us of Matters of Fact, the Wonders wrought by *Moses* and the Prophets, the extraordinary Birth of Christ from the Womb of a Virgin, his numerous and surprizing Miracles, &c. All these are things which Reason prejudiced by vain Philosophy knows not how to take to, but stands perplexed and wavering till a Spirit of Meekness subjects the Understanding, and over-rules all Arguments of vulgar Reasoning to Submission to the Authority and Truth of God who has revealed them, and thus they pass into Matters of Faith. Those who are too curious and critical in their Enquiries into these things, and will believe nothing of Revelation but what they are able to make out by common Principles of Reason and Observation, consider not how very weak and imperfect Human Understanding is even in its best Improvements, how little we know, or can know of Beings superior to our own. A meek and humble Spirit considers this, and applies it, and looks with Awe and Reverence upon the Sacred Mysteries of Religion, as in
their

their own Nature too high to be *understood* by us, yet, as God has revealed them, necessary and reasonable to be *believed*. But such as have not this Disposition, such as are proud, conceited, and self-willed, such as imagine they understand things, and will believe nothing they cannot understand, are in a fair way to lose their *Religion* in the Extravagance of their *Reason* and *Fancy*. I have not Time now to prove that the Scriptures, which reveal to us all those Matters of Faith, are the Inspiration and the Word of GOD, tho' there are abundant Arguments that put it beyond all Dispute; but I will shew you in a few Words the Ground we have in general to rely upon what the holy Scriptures teach us, and how far Meekness is concern'd in that Belief, and for Brevity we will consider only the Case of the New Testament: In order to believe the *Historical* Part, that there really was such a Person as *Christ*, born miraculously of a pure Virgin, testify'd to be the Son of God by an audible Voice from Heaven two several times, that he wrought many Miracles beyond the Power of Art or Nature, and such as appear from the Circumstances of them to admit of no Collusion or Fraud; that he

he liv'd an innocent and divine Life, that he suffered upon the Cross, and that he rose again the third Day from the Grave, we have need only of the same Meekness that is requisite in believing any civil History in the World, *viz.* that we should not obstinately reject the uncontrolled Testimony of that Age wherein he lived, and of so many Ages since, and of Persons who for ought appears are at least as credible (if not, through the particular Marks of Integrity we may perceive in them, much more so) as any other Historians, or any other Persons in the Age we live in. If any Story should be publish'd in our Age by discreet, sober Writers, and not contradicted by the present Times, it were an Injury to us, an Affront to common Faith and Credit, if Posterity should not believe it; and those who so refuse it, are not Masters of that Ingenuity and Modesty which becomes them. Submitting then upon this Ground to believe the *Historical* Part, the *Doctrinal* will force its Way; for if I believe the Particulars before mention'd, the Passages of his Life related by the four Evangelists, it will appear that Christ was an extraordinary Person, a Prophet sent from God, and inspir'd by God;
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and if so, Meekness and Reason will both tell us we ought to believe without Difficulty whatever he affirms of the Nature of God, of himself, of the Necessity and Design of his sufferings, of his coming again to judge the World, &c. tho' our Reason cannot comprehend them all, because it will be certain that *he knew the truth* of these things, and that being sent from God to instruct us, God would not have owned him in so extraordinary a manner, if he had not *faithfully discharg'd* his Office, or if in any thing he had *impos'd upon us* and *deceiv'd us*. But tho' we have this Reason to believe him, it is a Reason from Meekness, which submits our Understanding to the Testimony of Christ, and insists not upon those Objections to the Doctrine which the noisie Pertness of our Fancies, our shallow and conceited Notions, might pretend to raise.

(2.) As to that other Part of the Revelation of the Will of God, which concerns *our Practice*; there is great need also of this same Grace of *Meekness* in complying with it: For by a strange Perverseness in Mens Tempers, some are as apt to *despise* the Precepts of Virtue and Holiness deliver'd to us in the holy Scriptures, because they are *plain*
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and *intelligible*, and stoop to ordinary Capacities, as others are to *reject* Matters of Faith, because their Reason *cannot comprehend* them. But even with all they have more or less this Disadvantage, that Sin has gain'd the first Possession of our Hearts, and Pride particularly has usurp'd the Dominion in us; we are apt to be *self-will'd* and *humour-some*, to have a good Opinion of all we do, and not to care for any Precepts which restrain our Appetites and Passions, and teach us to deny our selves, or reproach us for having done amiss. 'Tis easie therefore to perceive what Work there is for *Meekness* here. And *First* we are highly to *honour* those Precepts of an holy Life, as the Dictates of God, who is perfect and unerring Wisdom, the Sovereign Lord of all things, the Author of our Salvation, and who accordingly has the sole Right of prescribing how he will be served, and upon what Conditions we shall be blessed and saved. *Solomon* tells us that *where* Eccles. 8. *the word of a king is there is power*; and ^{4.} if the Power and Word of a King is not to be despised, surely much less is that of him who is the King of Kings. Let us therefore, when we read or reflect upon any particular Precept, any Com-
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mand of God in Holy Scripture, do it with all that Respect and Reverence at least with which we would receive the Commands of our Prince, or our Parents, or any other whom we highly value for their Wisdom or their Faithfulness. *Secondly*, we must obediently and carefully observe and practise all we are commanded by him. We must be willing to be governed, setting aside our own Pride, and Prejudices, our
 2 Cor. 10. Lusts and Passions, *casting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* And all this cannot be done but by the Spirit of Meekness, which appears hereby to have so great an Influence with respect to our Duty to God, that it reaches to the same Extent with our Obedience, and is the best Foundation for it, as Pride and Presumption are usually at the Root of every Sin.

The *Second* Exercise of Meekness towards GOD, regards the Methods of his *Providence*, with Relation either to our selves or others. Most Men are of that tender and delicate Composition, that querulous and complaining Temper, that they can bear nothing; so fond of them-

themselves, so possessed with a good Opinion of their own Merit, and so devoted to the Enjoyments of Honour, Wealth and Pleasure, that they look upon every *light* Affliction as an Hardship, and every *great* one as Intollerable; and this makes them fretful and impatient, murmuring against God, and bemoaning themselves with a silly and indecent as well as sinful Passion. Or when they look abroad, and see how many Evils and Sufferings happen to Mankind, which fall not out so exactly and regularly as to be always called the Punishment of such a Sin upon such a Person, but on the contrary many wicked Men prosper in the World, and many good and virtuous are pressed hard with Sufferings, they are apt to reflect upon God as a hard Master, or to think he wholly neglects the World, and cares not either what we do, or suffer. But Meekness would bring us to a better Notion, and teach us to consider God,

First, As a Sovereign Lord, under whose Dominion all his Creatures are, his Government absolute, and without all Conditions or Limitations, but what he is pleased to impose upon himself, and what he receives from himself by the benign Influences of his Love and Mercy;

and therefore as we are all the Work of his Hands, created to serve his Glory, he may surely dispose of us all at his own Will and Pleasure, and to his own Ends: For which Reason the truly meek Christian will patiently submit to whatever Suffering God shall lay upon him, and be willing that God should be glorified in him, *whether it be by life, or by death.*

Phil. I. 20.

Secondly, We are to consider God as a Lawgiver, annexing Penalties to the Breach of his Laws, and these Penalties issuing from an exact and pure Justice, in which there is no mixture of Oppression or Cruelty, but very much of Favour and Mercy; and this pleads very highly for the Practice of Meekness under Afflictions, since we are all (even the best of us) guilty before God, and deserve much worse than even the most unhappy of us can suffer in this World. As to the Case of other Men, the Sufferings of the Good and Virtuous may be accounted for the same way; and as to the flourishing Estate of the Wicked, whom God seems at present not to punish or take notice of, why should *our eye be evil, because he is good? Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* This *Meekness* would suggest, and we should hearken to: For if God, who is immediately

mediately concerned in the Provocations, thinks fit (in Mercy to the Sinners, to give them farther Time for Repentance) to bear with them, what have *we* to do to call *Fire from Heaven* upon them?

But *Thirdly*, We are to consider God as a *Father*, for so he is represented to us in the Holy Scriptures, and the Obedient are his Sons, whom nevertheless he many times exercises with great Tryals and Sufferings in the World, but it is their Duty to distinguish and observe the *design* of these, and by a just Consideration of that, to satisfy themselves with the Proceeding, and make that pious Use of it, for which the Affliction was ordained. *We have had fathers of our* Heb. 12.9, *flesh which corrected us and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For whom the Lord lov-* Heb. 12.6. *eth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* This also is the Language of Meekness, which I have now shewn to be necessary in all our Deportment towards God. It follows, in the next place, that I should consider this Grace,

II. As *Man* is the Object of it; and here we have a very large Field before

us. For Men may be considered under these three Ranks,

1. Superiors;
2. Equals; and
3. Inferiors:

And to every of these the Meekness of a Christian is to diffuse and extend it self.

[1.] *First* therefore for *Superiors*; all those in general who are *above us*, and especially such as have a Right to *govern and command us*.

In the number of Superiors, to whom we are to exercise this Grace of Meekness, we must reckon First, the *Supream Civil Power*, established by the Laws and Custom of the Country, whether in a single Hand, or many, and by whatever Title distinguished as Emperor, King, Prince, States, &c. For let the Constitution or the Name be what it will, if there be an Investiture of Power legally in the Person or Persons to govern, there is a *Meekness* due towards them, from those who are under their Government. I shall here confine my self to the Polity of our own Kingdom, and consider how we are to express this Christian Meekness to the King or Queen. And this we are to do,

First, By a chearful and diligent Observance of their Commands, or of the
Laws

Laws by which they govern. By the Commands of the King or Queen, (respecting still the Government of our own Nation,) I mean those Proclamations or Injunctions issued out in their Names, (by Vertue of their Royal Prerogative) upon particular Occasions, or any present Emergency. By the Laws, I mean those which are generally known and called so, the Statutes and common Customs by which this Kingdom is governed. The Meekness we are to shew in Relation to both these is an *Observance* or actual *Performance* of them, and Obedience to them, doing what they enjoyn, and forbearing to do what they forbid. And this Obedience must be *cheerful* and *diligent*, not so much from Fear lest we be punished for the Neglect or Contempt of them, but from a Principle of Duty and Humility; *You must needs be subject*, says St. Paul, *not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.* Rom. 13.^{5.}

The *Second* Expression of Meekness towards them, is a patient and quiet Submission to the Punishments they inflict. *For they are the ministers of God, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil; Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* Rom 13.^{24.}

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1 Pet. 2.
13, 14.

But beside the Supream or Sovereign, there are other subordinate Powers commission'd and deriv'd from that, subordinate indeed to the Prince, but still superior to the Subjects, *viz.* Magistrates or Governors appointed for particular Purposes, and in particular Districts, for the better Administration of Justice, and other Ends of Civil Government. And these also have the same sacred Stamp of Authority upon them, tho' not so large and extensive. St. Peter is very clear in this Matter, *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supream; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* To these our Meekness is to express it self, *First*, By Honour and Reverence, according to their respective Qualities and Degrees of Power; and this forbids all despising and degrading of them, all calumniating and speaking Ill of them, all rude, bold and obstinate Behaviour before them. *Secondly*, By Obedience to their due Commands in the Exercise of that Authority which is entrusted with them. And, *Thirdly*, In submitting without Resentment or Impatience

patience to the Penalties which they inflict in the Execution of the Laws upon us.

In the Second Order of Superiors to whom we are to exercise this Grace of Meekness, are the *Governors and Pastors of the Church*, the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, whom our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, has set over us for our Edification, and by whom accordingly his Spiritual *Israel* has been fed and taught, govern'd and guided these sixteen Hundred Years and more, ever since the Time of the Apostles. To these the first Duty of Meekness is Reverence and Regard. This St. Paul requires. *And we beseech you Brethren to know them which labour amongst you and are over you in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly for their works sake.* Their Office, and the Work they do, require this Tribute of Respect from those especially amongst whom and to whom they do it. It was the Work of Christ himself, who went about preaching, and praying, rebuking and comforting; and as he is still the Head of the Church, he has appointed this Order of Men to supply his personal Absence in the World, and shew unto us continually
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1 Thes. 5.

12, 13.

Heb. 13.
17.

the way of Salvation. And for this Reason it is also, that, in the *Second* place, our Meekness towards them ought to shew it self in a due Obedience to their Instructions, Admonitions and Re-proofs. *Obey them that have the rule over you, says St. Paul, and submit your selves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account: that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.* If you regard not their Advice, the Loss will be your own, tho' the Grief of it must needs make them uneasie. As to the Particulars of this Obedience, it is to be (1.) in Matters of *Doctrine*; we are to submit to their Directions and Expositions, where they are not *plainly* contrary to the Word of God; for in Matters of Doubt and Difficulty, we ought rather to rely on their Judgments than our own. And (2.) in Point of Worship, that is, the Order and Manner of Publick Prayers and Services, which with us are drawn into one Form, and commonly known by the Name of the Book of *Common-Prayer*. To this we ought in Meekness to conform our selves, as to the Care and Wisdom of the Rulers of our Church. And (3.) we are to expresse our Obedi-
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ence (and in that our Meekness) to them in the Point of *Ecclesiastical Discipline*, exercised according to the Law of Christ, and the Constitutions of particular National Churches. The Ordinary, and such as are in Authority under him, are here in the Place of Magistrate and Officers of Justice, to see that Scandals be punish'd, and Decency and good Order kept up, according to the Spiritual Laws or Canons of the Church; and such as they ought to be obey'd: *If he neglect to hear the church*, says our Saviour, *let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.* Matth. 18. 17.

There are still remaining three other Objects of this Christian Meekness, under the Head of Superiors, and they are Parents, Masters, and Husbands, to whom there is a Debt of Meekness owing respectively from their Children, Servants and Wives. I am not now concern'd to lay down the *whole Duty* of every one of these Relations, but only so much of it as must proceed from a Spirit of *Meekness*, and that is the same in general which I have mention'd two or three times before upon account of other Superiors, *viz.* (1.) Reverence or Honour, and (2.) Obedience.

To

To begin with the First, which is Reverence; and here,

- i. With the Reverence due from *Children* to their *Parents*, who next under God are Authors of their Being, their Lives, their Substance, and all other Advantages, and having by the very Law of Nature a large Power and Command, are to be own'd and respected accordingly. Thus the Fifth Commandment expressly obliges us to *HONOUR our Father and Mother*; and by several other Places in holy Scripture it appears to be a natural Duty, presumed, known, and taken for granted in all Parts of the World. So God complaining of the Rudeness of the Priests, and the Irreverence of the People, and the dishonourable Use of holy Things amongst the *Jews*, takes the Advantage of reprehending it from the Custom, or at least the acknowledg'd and presum'd Right of Reverence and Honour to Parents,

Mal. i. 6. in these Words. *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If I then be a father, where is my honour, — saith the Lord of Hosts. Agur also giving an Account of an evil Generation of Men, reckons this amongst the rest;*

Prov. 30. *There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.*

ther. And how monstrous and unnatural the Sin is, appears from the Punishment assign'd it in the same Chapter, *The eye that mocketh at his father, &c.* Prov. 30. *the ravens of the valley shall pick it out,* 17. *and the young eagles shall eat it.* By all which it is sufficiently evident, that Children owe a *Reverence* to their Parents. The Particulars of which I shall only give you in general. It expresses it self in all Civility and Decency of Manners, in complying with those Infirmities to which the Years of Parents probably may expose them, in loving their Persons and their Memory, standing up for their Reputation, supplying their Wants if they be poor, refreshing and comforting their Sorrows, easing and removing their Burdens, doing them all the Pieties and Honours of Children while they are living, and following them to their Graves with all requisite Decency and Solemnity. All which are so much the Dictates of Reason and Nature, that we could not but discern the Character of a Duty in them, if it had not been renewed by the Injunctions of Christianity.

2. A Reverence is due from *Servants* to their *Masters*; and this also by the common Reason and Practice of all Mankind, confirm'd by the Laws of our Religion.

ligion. St. Paul has fully enough determin'd this in his first Epistle to Timothy; *Let as many servants as are under the yoke account their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.* Honour here (tho' it includes Obedience) I take to imply chiefly and primarily Respect and Reverence, an Esteem of their Master's Person, a Readiness to protect and defend him from Injuries, a Tendernefs and Zeal for his Reputation, and a Behaviour of Humility and good Manners towards him upon all Occasions; *not pertly and saucily answering again, or contradicting them, but shewing all due Submission, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.* And this Meekness is the more necessary, (according to the Text first cited) that the Christian Religion be not evil spoken of, that there be no Pretence to charge it with abolishing so reasonable a Point of Decency and good Order, or encouraging Sauciness and Pride, and setting Servants upon a level with their Masters.

3. A Reverence is also due from *Wives* unto their *Husbands*; for, notwithstanding this is a Relation of the nearest Endearment of any other in the World,

World, it leaves still some Inequality; the *Husband* is to be esteem'd the *Head*, and upon that account to have the Reverence and Respect of a Superior: This *St. Paul* expressly commands, when having obliged the Husband to love his Wife, he concludes with this reciprocal Duty of her to him, *Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.* Eph. 5. 33. In order to this, I suppose, it is, that *St. Peter* recommends to all Christian Women the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which will certainly shew it self in bearing with the Husband's Passions and Infirmities, in forbearing all reproachful, bitter or provoking Language to him, in representing him to the best Advantage abroad, and treating him with the mildest and most affectionate Carriage at home, putting a favourable Interpretation upon all his Actions, submitting to his Judgment as the more able to advise, and being contented with the State of Life and Provision which he is able to make.

(2.) To consider now the Meekness of Obedience in all these Relations; and,

1. In the *First* place, that of *Children* to their *Parents*. *Children*, says *St. Paul*, Eph. 6. 1. *obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* And that we may not think

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this *Ἐν Κυρίῳ*, [*in the Lord*] is such a Restraint of the natural Duty of Obedience, as to leave room for any captious Pretences of Liberty to the Disobedient, the same Apostle elsewhere delivers the
 Col. 3. 20. Precept thus; *Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord.* These two Texts interpret one another; for Children are to obey their Parents *in the Lord*, so as that they make not use of that Limitation to excuse them from a general and hearty Obedience to the utmost of their Power; and yet they are only so to obey their Parents *in all things*, as is consistent with their Obedience to the other Laws of God; and not to make this Precept a Pretence for committing any known Sin, or neglecting any necessary Duty, upon Command of a Parent. An Obedience in Children, thus temper'd, is of so high Acceptance and Reward with God, that St. Paul takes Notice that it is the *first Command* to which there is annex'd a Promise, *That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst live long upon the earth.*

Eph. 6. 2,
3.

2. The Obedience due from *Servants*, to their *Masters*, and this also we shall
 Col. 3. 22, find expressly commanded. *Servants,*
 23. *obey in all things your Masters accord-*
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ing to the flesh: not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. The very same Precept we have, and almost in the same Words, in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, *Ser-* Eph. 6.5, *vants, be obedient to them that are your* 6, 7. *masters, &c.*

3. and Lastly, There is an Obedience also due from Wives to their Husbands. And this is clearly the Doctrine of the Apostle. *Wives, submit your selves* Eph. 5.22, *unto your own husbands, as unto the* 23, 24. *Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.* And in another place, *Wives, submit your* Col. 3.18. *selves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord* St. Peter also requires the same, *Likewise ye wives be in subjecti-* 1 Pet. 3.1, *on to your own husbands; and goes on inculcating upon all of that Relation the Ornament of a meek and peaceable Spirit, as being those who tho' they have a Right to govern the rest of the Family, are yet themselves to be govern'd by their Husbands.*

[2.] We are now to consider another Rank of Men, our *Equals*, to whom this Grace of Meekness is to shew it self in our Behaviour. And these I shall consider under a threefold Distinction of them, as Friends, as Enemies, and as Strangers or Persons indifferent towards us.

I. Our first Enquiry therefore shall be, what Acts of Meekness our *Friends* may justly expect from us. And these are,

(I.) *Compliance with their Humour*, in things which are *innocent* at least, tho' not convenient; abstaining from what we know will provoke them, or probably may do so; and when they happen to be uneasy, wisely and charitably bearing with their Infirmities; not violently and rashly opposing *our* Passion to *theirs*. And this Compliance or Condescension is the very Cement of all Friendship, without which it would dissolve, or be soon broke to pieces. For the Tempers of Men, their Appetites and Inclinations, are different, their Judgments may be oft mistaken, and their Apprehensions wrong; the Passions and Desires of some Men are not so easily govern'd as they should be, and by many concurring Disadvantages they are.

are exposed to great Errors and to great Failings. For which Reason 'tis necessary their Friends should so far exercise this Grace of Meekness towards them, as, where the Matter is not great, to wave insisting upon their own Opinion against theirs, tho' perhaps they know themselves to be in the right; to deny themselves the Employments they most delight in when it may oblige and serve their Friend, and to govern themselves in many other little Circumstances so as may be most *agreeable*, or at least not disagreeable to him. But in Matters of great Consequence they must reprove him, they are mildly and at a proper Season to represent to him his Sin committed, or dissuade him from committing it; but not imperiously and passionately to reproach him, or exasperate and confirm him in the pursuit of it by an ill-manag'd Contradiction. For he who takes this rough and surly Course with his Friend, if he design to profit him by it, mistakes in the Means, and if he do not, fails in the Intention.

The Second Office of Meekness toward our Friends, is *Submission* to their *Rebukes and Admonitions*. It is the Duty of one Friend faithfully and di-

rectly to reprove another, and that both by the Law of *Moses* and of *Christ*. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*, says the first; and the other (deliver'd us by *St. Paul*) enjoins, that *if any man obey not the word of God, we should note that man, and admonish him as a Brother*. Now in making this a Duty of Friends and Equals one to another, God has admirably testified his own Good-will to us, by providing us with living Monitors, familiar, and of the same Condition with our selves, kind, faithful to our Interest, and every other way obliging, and who might be the likeliest Persons to prevail with us to secure our own eternal Happiness, and leave the Paths of Hell and Destruction. And because friendly *Reproof* is so profitable to this Purpose, it is affirmed by *Solomon* to be better, even when it is bold and open, than that silent secret Love which like a false Glass presents no Spots, no Errors or Infirmities. But that it may be effectual, and do the Good that is design'd by it, the Rebuke must fall upon a willing Breast, and be received like Showers upon the soft Mould, without Noise and without Recrimination. Those drops of Rain which fall
upon

upon Stones and hard Bodies, are dash'd in Pieces and scatter'd into little and un-useful Portions: So are the Reproofs of a Friend which fall upon a stubborn and impatient Sinner. There remains no Advantage of them, and the Man suffers under this Unhappiness, that the best part of Friendship is through his own ill Humour wholly unprofitable to him. 'Tis necessary therefore that we should not be proud and perverse, not fretful and inconsiderate, not apt to make unworthy Returns or false Excuses: But consider the Admonition as sick Persons consider Physick at the Hands of the Prescriber, who for the hope of Advantage by it are content to swallow bitter and ill-tasted Medicines.

The third Branch of Meekness toward our Equals, in the Case of Friendship or Neighbourhood, is *Preference* or *giving place* to them, or preferring them in a Way of *Honour*, *Respect* and *Reputation* above our selves. This to *Superiors* is granted by the general Voice of all Mankind; tho' in *Practice*, even *they* are often encroach'd upon, by the Pride of forward Spirits: But the giving Place to our Equals may perhaps be thought dishonourable and mean, an Ar-

Rom. 12.
19.

gument of a weak Mind insensible of our own Rank, and of the Esteem we may justly challenge in the World. Yet the Christian Law obliges us to this in point of Meekness. 'Tis plainly enjoin'd by St. Paul; *be kindly affectioned one to another; with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.* Christians ought to give their Neighbours the Esteem and Valuation, which often perhaps in strict Right and Justice may not belong to them, because we know not all the Circumstances that must go to the stating of their Worth and Merit exactly, and 'tis good to err upon the favourable hand in such a Case. But our own Weakness and Defects, our many Sins and great Corruptions, we know (or should know) more of, and therefore ought to be most severe upon our selves. In judging of our selves, we are to proceed by exact Measures, by the Scales of Justice, and the Weights of Innocence; but in our Accounts of others, we ought to throw in charitable Grains and fair Allowances for those Merits and Excellencies in them, which *we* may not be acquainted with: So that supposing the Case to be in reality equal betwixt us, the superadded Charity must needs bear down our Neighbour's Scale, and therefore

fore Preference is to be given him. And that it is so far from being an Injury or Disreputation to any Man so to do, as to be rather, on the contrary, a sure Step to Honour and Esteem, appears from the Discourse of our Saviour upon this Head, when dining at the House of a certain *Pharisee*, and perceiving the Vanity of the other Guests in chusing the uppermost Places at the Board, he supposes the Case of two Men invited to an Entertainment, the one assuming to himself the highest Place, the other voluntarily seating himself at the lower End of the Table; and puts the Company in Mind that it is more Honour to the latter to have it said to him, *Friend go up higher*, than to the former to have it taken notice of that he was gotten of himself too high already; and concludes with this very observable Remark, *Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Luke 14.
7, 8, 9, 10,
11.

2 I come now to consider the Duty of Meekness to such as are our *Enemies*. And this may be comprised in three Heads also, *Forbearance, Patience, and Benevolence.*

(1.) Forbearance; by which I mean the keeping from giving any just or probable

bable Offence to an Adversary, and the not taking all Advantages in Law against him for inconsiderate Words and Actions, or trifling and petty Trespasses; nor always flying to the Refuge of the Laws, and the Judgment of Courts, even where the Injury is considerable. Such is the Temper recommended us by St. *Paul*, when he beseeches the *Ephesians* to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love. By these we honour the Gospel of Christ, and adorn our Profession of it; whereas the going to Law contentiously and idly is forbidden us by our Lord himself. He who endures Evils, and forbears Advantages, does most like a Christian; tho' nevertheless, where the Injury is of great Consequence, it is not unlawful to endeavour by the Course of publick Justice to do ourselves Right.

(2.) The next Instance of Meekness to our Enemies is *Patience*, by which I mean the forbearing *private Revenge*, returning *Evil for Evil* in any other Method than by Authority of Law. Patience is the subjecting of a Man's self to Suffering; and when the Suffering

ing is *from Men*, we are to be as void of Discontent and Revenge, as when it is inflicted upon us by the immediate Hand of *God*. The State of Christianity ought to be a State of good Agreement with all Mankind, and the great Obstruction of this is not so much the striking of one Stroak by an Offender, as the returning it by the Sufferer, for this indeed is the full Birth of Enmity and Contradiction. An evil Man may do much Wrong to his Neighbour; but the greater Wrong, which is a Wrong to Christianity, is the revenging of that Evil. This Point of Meekness is more often and earnestly press'd upon us than almost any other Part of our Religion; and that not only in general Precepts, such as, *If it be possible, as much as in you lyes, live peaceably with all men*; wherein the Duty now before us certainly is included; but also in particular and expresse Terms. See that none render evil for evil to any man. Charity is not easily provoked, bears all things — endures all things. Avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.

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The like in Substance with these we find in many other Texts of Scripture, from which we cannot but conclude, that all Revenge (and not only that, but all passionate, bitter, and reviling Language, to or of an Enemy,) is utterly forbid to a Christian, of whom 'tis expected that he should imitate his Lord
 1 Pet. 2. and Master, *who when he was reviled*
 3. *reviled not again, when he suffered he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* But even this is not all ; for,

(3.) A third Branch of Meekness to our Enemies is still behind, which is *Benevolence, returning good for evil*, and keeping always a Temper ready to be reconciled. The meek Christian is to
 Rom. 12. overcome Evil with Good. *If his enemy*
 20. *hunger he is to feed him, if he thirst he is to give him drink:* He is to shew all manner of Readiness to do him any good Office which lyes in his Power ; *to do good to them that hate him, to bless them that curse him, to pray for them that despitefully use him and persecute him ; not*
 1 Pet. 3. 9. *only ; not rendring evil for evil, railing for railing ; but contrariwise blessing.* He is
 Eph. 4. 32. *to be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving,* and to offer all fair Christian Terms of Accommodation. For even this the
 Sufferer

Sufferer is to do, as well as the Offender; and this I suppose to be enforced in that of our Saviour, *when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any.* Mark 11. 25. This therefore the meek Christian is to do, if he would acquit himself as such to his Enemy.

The third Distinction we made in Equals was of such as are Strangers, or Persons indifferent to us. The Meekness we are to express to them is so much the same with several of the foregoing Instances, that I need not enlarge upon it, the Reason and Analogy of things will point them out. I will only add as to these Persons, that we should abstain from giving them Offence, and provoking them wilfully and unworthily; for tho' we cannot yet call them our *Friends*, we have no Reason to make them our *Enemies*; we ought not to be positive or contradicting, imperious or uncivil towards them, or curiously searching into their Infirmities, but be always ready to serve and oblige them as it falls in our way, always candidly interpreting their Words and Actions, charitably presuming the best in all Cases, and conversing meekly with them upon all Occasions.

[3.] The

[3.] The *Third* and last Order of Men, towards whom the Duty of Meekness is to shew it self, is that of *Inferiors*; and they being the Object, their Superiors must be those who are to exercise this Grace towards them; which may be done two Ways, by Humility and by Gentleness.

First we are to consider the Humility which it becomes Superiors to shew towards their Inferiors. And,

(1.) That which is due from *Sovereigns* and subordinate *Magistrates* to their Subjects or the Members of their Jurisdiction. Magistrates (whether supreme or subordinate) are appointed by God for the publick Service, the good Order and Government of Societies, that under them the Community may be safe and flourishing, and *live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty*; and not Societies erected purely to serve the Pride, and Power, and Grandeur of the Magistrate. The Humility therefore which becomes those who are in Posts of Authority consists in this, that they should not scornfully despise the Society (or any Member of it) which they govern; they should not be difficult of Access, or take upon them *unnecessary* Degrees of State and
Refer-

Reservedness; but with a fair and condescending Temper respect the Persons, encourage and reward the Services, and meet half way the Affections of their Subjects, as those who bear the same Image and Character of Manhood and Christianity with themselves; and also apply themselves with a chearful Diligence to do Justice to the meanest, as well as the greatest among them, and to answer the Ends of their Institution for the Good and Benefit of Mankind, pursuing it with a tender and paternal Care.

(2.) The like Humility is to be expressed by the Governors of the Church towards all such as are under their Charge. *St. Peter, requiring the Bishops and Elders to feed the Flock*, puts in this Caution, *that they should not do it as being lords over God's Heritage, but being Ensamples of Meekness and other Virtues to them.* For, says another Apostle, *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves your servants for Jesus sake.* So far indeed as these Governors may be stamp'd with any Civil Character of Honour or Authority, they may justly challenge and expect the Rights of it; the Management of all things under their Care

1 Pet. 5. 3.

2 Cor. 4. 5.

Care and Charge ought to be with much Condescension and Lowliness.

(3.) The Third Order is that of Parents, whom it concerns to use that kind of Humility towards their Children, which shews it self in Condescension and decent Familiarity; considering that their Children are a Part of themselves, whom as the Apostle takes notice no Man hates, so also no Man despises. It is not unbecoming this Relation, sometimes to desire where it may command; for Love, that great Precept of the Law of Nature, must needs so far suppress and level the Superiority, as to make the Relation sweet and pleasant. In regard to which, tho' it may well enough become Parents to require the Subjection of their Children, yet not to use them merely as Servants. And then,

(4.) Tho' the Practice of the World has made the Inferiority of *Servants* the vilest and most contemptible, especially in those Places where it was their Custom to buy and sell them for their Lives, upon which score they were esteemed no better than their Goods and Chattels, and thought to be so absolutely in their Disposal, that they might do so or with them as they pleased; yet by the Christian Law it will

will appear that even *Servants* are a Branch of those Inferiors to whom Humility and Condescension is to be used; and therefore tho' their servile Rank obliges them to an absolute Subjection, their Masters ought to treat them nevertheless according to the Rules of Meekness and Charity. As they are Fellow-Christians, admitted to the same glorious Hopes, entituled to the same Inheritance and Reward; this Relation of Brotherhood ought so to moderate the Stile, as to prevent all unreasonable and scornful Neglects, and take away the Marks of Villany and Contempt. This I forbid to be understood to any evil Purposes, as if the State of Christianity took away all Superiority: No, it was not intended to alter the State of things so far; but as it finds Men *Masters* and *Servants* so it leaves them, only it has the Force and Power to bridle the Extravagancies of Men, and that Excess of Dominion which was the common Practice of the *Gentiles*.

(5.) This Humility is also to be exercised by *Husbands* to their *Wives*, whom they are so to treat even as their own Flesh. For this is a Relation of that strict Unity and Endearment, that Height and Distance cannot but be a

great wrong to it. And if Husbands love their Wives even as themselves, with that entire and absolute Affection which becomes them, there cannot possibly be much of Superiority discovered; for Love, I told you, was of that Nature, that it equals those betwixt whom there might be otherwise some Disparity.

(6.) All others, whoever they be, that are below us, tho' we have no Authority or Dominion over them, have a Right to the good Offices of Humility and Condescension from us; even those who beg at our Doors are still to be treated as Men and Fellow-Christians, not with that Contempt and Pride which too many affect to shew towards them. I shall only say in general upon this Head, that we should despise no Body, for *whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his maker.*

Prov. 17. 5.

2. The Second Instance or Expression of Meekness towards Inferiors, is Gentleness, which is likewise to run thro' the several Relations above-mention'd.

(1.) In the Prince, or Magistrates governing under him, (who, according to St. Paul, are the Ministers of God to every one for good, and therefore ought to deal with those under their Jurisdiction, so

as

as it may appear they have no Design but for their Good, or of that of the Community by them) this Gentleness is to express it self in the wise and charitable Moderation of Penalties and Executions, so far as may not too much slacken the Reins of Government, and teach Offenders Insolence by Impunity; in punishing (when they are oblig'd to do it) with Regret and Uneasiness, in imitation of Almighty God, whose Officers and Commissioners they are, and *who has no pleasure in the death or punishment of the wicked, and does not willingly afflict the children of men*; in avoiding all Tyranny and Oppression; in giving a ready Ear to the Complaints of the injur'd, and the Requests of all who sue for Justice, compassionating their Losses and Sufferings, and being always forward to employ the Power they have for their Relief.

(2.) The Governors of the Church are to use a fair, gentle, and moderate Behaviour to the People committed to their Charge. *The servant of the Lord*, ^{2 Tim. 2.} says St. Paul, (directing himself to *Ti-* ^{24, 25.} *mothy*, Bishop of *Ephesus*) *must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.* And tho' there

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often

often is occasion for Ecclesiastical Censures and Inflictions for the Reduction of Sinners, and preserving good Order and Obedience, yet in the common Practice of Life there is nothing more an Ornament to the Fathers of the Church, than a benign and gentle Usage of the Flock entrusted with them.

(3.) This Gentleness is also to be exercised to Children by their Parents. *St. Paul* is very expresse to this Purpose, *Eph. 6. 4. Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* And elsewhere almost in the same Words; *Col. 3. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children lest they be discouraged.* By the former Text it appears that there is a Nurture and Admonition, or a Discipline which Parents are to use, in restraining them from all manner of vicious Practices; but the Exercise of it is not to be so severe and sharp as to provoke them to impatient and disobedient Anger, nor so as to discourage and dishearten them. For *too much* Discipline may have an ill Effect, as well as *too little*; and all Tempers are not able to bear the Severity of it. This therefore should be wisely observed by Parents, that they neither be too remiss, so as to lose their Authority, and neglect the

the Government of their Children, nor yet so severe and tyrannical, as if they were practising upon their Beasts of Labour.

(4.) This Gentleness is still farther to be expressed by *Masters* towards their *Servants*. The Apostle requires it of them that they should *forbear threatening*, as knowing that their master is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with God. Christian Masters are to be as *Parents* to their Servants, and ought not to provoke them by passionate chiding and severe Corrections, by evil and imperious Usage, but reserving their Anger and their Discipline to proper Times and Provocations, and confining it within due Bounds; they are in general to behave themselves moderately and charitably to them, laying reasonable and favourable Burdens upon them, allowing them convenient time for Rest or Recreation, encouraging their honest Labours, and in their whole Conduct towards them, remembering themselves to be the Servants of the great Lord and Governor of Heaven and Earth, to whom they must give Account as of other things, so also of their Behaviour towards these Dependants.

(5.) The Husband is obliged in the same Law of Gentleness to his Wife; for thus runs the Command, *Husbands love your Wives, and be not bitter against them*; treat them not with a morose and unkind Peevishness, a surly or a boistrous Carriage, but with all that Tenderness, that soft and affectionate, that mild and grateful Language, which may endear you to them, and make their Lives a Comfort.

(6.) Lastly, This Gentleness must extend to all who are in Rank, Fortune, or Knowledge inferior to us, and be shewn by an affable and courteous Temper, a calm and easie Conversation and Behaviour towards them. For the Precept is general, that we
 Tit. 3. 2. should be *no brawlers, but gentle, shew-*
 Eph. 4. 3 1. *ing all meekness unto all men.* That all
bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and
clamour, and evil-speaking, be put a-
 Jam. 3. 17. *way from us.* And this is the true wis-
dom from above, which is first pure, then
peaceable, gentle and easie to be intreat-
ed, full of mercy and good fruits.

We have now very largely gone through the *Description of Meekness.* It remains now,

II. That

II. That we explain the *Promise* made to it, or consider and apply the *Blessing*; *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* In doing this we shall,

I. Enquire what is meant by inheriting the Earth. Now by this must needs be meant the Possession or Enjoyment of any of the Profits or Benefits which Men are capable of in this present Life. And these are many, if we take in the whole Compass; for into this Account we are to put a long and healthful Life, a fair and numerous Posterity, a pleasant Habitation, a good Neighbourhood, Success, Honour, Peace and Quietness, Command, Reputation, Riches, and other earthly Advantages. Earth being the Place where all these are conferred, and the Nature of them differing from (or at least being inferior to) the Rewards of Heaven, they may be properly stiled the Blessings of the Earth.

The Inheritance of the Earth therefore must be the Possession or Enjoyment of some of these, for it is not necessary we should include *all* of them; but he may be said to inherit the Earth, who has the Enjoyment but of some one or other of these Blessings, and especially

especially if it be in any full and remarkable Measure.

2. We must make out the Truth of this Promise; that the Inheritance of the Earth, in some or other the Particulars above-mentioned, is actually the Reward or Portion of the Meek. And this will appear upon a double Account, (1.) As Meekness, in the Latitude I have expressed it to you, is the best and chiefest Instrument of securing Peace in the World; (2.) As it has also farther, a proper and peculiar Influence upon some special Advantages of the present Life.

For the First of these then, it will be requisite I should a little make it appear that of all secular Felicities, Peace is the most large and comprehensive, as taking in many others, and giving indeed a Relish to 'em all; and then I must make it evident that Peace is secured chiefly by the Exercise of this Grace of Meekness. Now that Peace is a most full and copious Blessing, will need no other Proof than the common Sense and Experience of all Persons, who cannot but take Notice that every other Instance of Felicity, how considerable soever, without the Possession of this, is so abated and restrained, that there is nothing at all in it
of

of that Relish and Satisfaction, which otherwise (crown'd with the Addition of Peace) it certainly would have; For War and Tumult is a stormy Sea which shipwrecks every honest Fortune, and drowns a great deal of Treasure past Recovery, and usually the weightiest also sink the soonest. When the *Psalmist* would describe the excellent Reward of a righteous Man (which I suppose to be only meant of the Rewards of this World) he does it by this one Expression of *Peace*. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace*, viz, it is prosperous and fortunate, rich and honourable, which are all well enough comprised in the Name of *Peace*. The Prophet *Jeremiah* also brings in the *Jews*, complaining of the miserable State of their Captivity; *We looked for peace, but no good came*. Where we may observe, that Peace is made of the same Extent and Latitude as Good; by which is imply'd, that Peace is the very Salt and Relish of all other good things, and without it the Goodness of them cannot be enjoyed. The next thing we are to do, is, to shew that Meekness is the most apt and proper Instrument of making and securing

securing Peace, which will be as clear to you as the former, by a little Observation. We will take Peace, for the present, in that publick Sense of the Word, wherein it signifies the calm and quiet Administration of the State or Kingdom, proceeding from an happy Concord of the Prince and People. Now how far Meekness contributes to establish this, is easily visible, for one Branch of the Meekness due from Subjects to their Sovereign (as laid down before) was *Obedience* (by which we are to understand the actual Performance of, or Conformity to Laws, where they may justly, and with Agreement to the Law of God, be observed) and this *Obedience* or *Submission* must produce a good Agreement betwixt every good Prince and his Subjects; and consequently many Evils and Sufferings, many Losses and Ruins are thereby prevented, which in open Hostilities must needs ensue, where the Sovereign and the People are drawn into two Parties. This keeps open the Books of Law and Justice, which in the Distraction of civil Feuds are either thrown aside or torn asunder; and so much farther also it goes towards securing the Inheritance of the Earth,

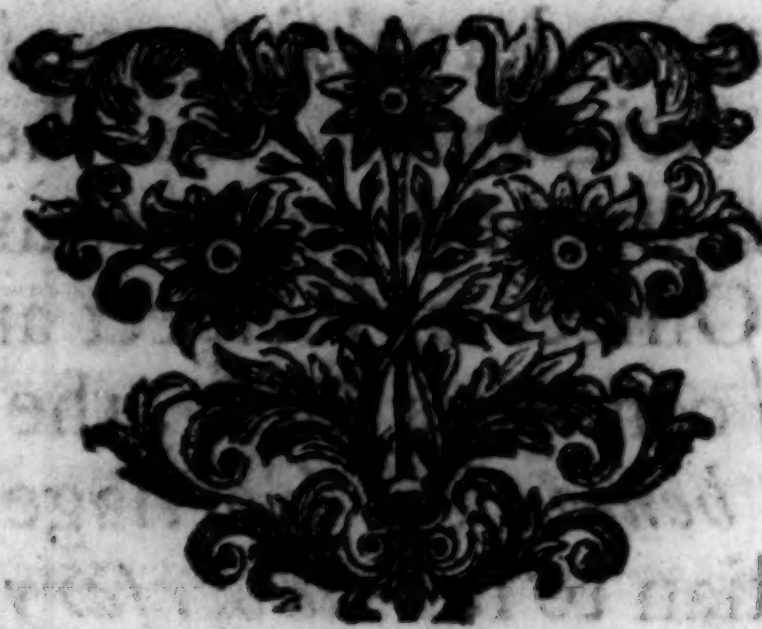
Earth, that it keeps open the Course of Trade, and the other honest Methods of Gain and Profit, which are wholly shut up in the time of War; it prevents a Deluge of Blood, in which may be supposed the Loss of our own Lives, or of our Relations, as well as the Destruction of our private Fortunes. And therefore as a meek Obedience secures us from Rebellion, and the Confusions incident thereto, it must be look'd upon as a principal Instrument of Peace. If we go on to consider Meekness also as due from Superiors to their Inferiors, from the Sovereign to his Subjects, the Argument will be still much strengthen'd. The Instances of that Meekness, I told you, were Humility and *Gentleness*; and by these the Prince is restrain'd from Tyranny, Violence and Oppression, which might be the Cause of War on *his* Side; he secures to himself, by the Mildness of his Government, the Hearts and Affections of his People, and cuts off all Pretence and Occasion to rebel. And thus you see what Influence this Grace of Meekness yields towards the Blessing of publick Peace, and in that towards the secure Enjoyment of many other Blessings. I have not Time to

run through all the other Branches and Instances of Meekness, and shew you *particularly* the noble Treasure of Advantages they abound with to private Persons and Families; but I shall say something of this *in general*, and *briefly* under my Second Head. And in that I am,

(2.) To shew that Meekness has a special and peculiar Influence in obtaining or securing some very great Advantages of the present Life. It very much secures the *Honour* and *Succession of Families*; for this engages Parents to the Love of their Children, and Children to the Obedience of their Parents, and so secures the passing of that Honour and Estate from Father to Son, and so downwards through many Generations, which by the unnatural Differences of such Relations, often come to be diverted, and the Succession broke by disinheriting. The Practice of Meekness also betwixt Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants, produces that *Serenity and Happiness within Doors*, which is able to make even Poverty it self, and many other unhappy Circumstances, supportable, and without which the most plentiful Fortune,

Fortune, and an hundred other Advantages, will be but little Comfort. It secures the *Estate* also, and the honest Ways of *Gain* and *Profit*, by the Gentleness of the Master, *encouraging* and *rewarding* his *Servants*, and the Obedience, Faithfulness and Respect of the *Servant's preserving the Fortune and Reputation of his Master from Decay and Injury*; by preventing those Differences betwixt Husband and Wife, and those Suits at Law and uncharitable Contentions in a Neighbourhood, which have ruin'd many Families, and laid waste great Estates; and by taking away all Occasions of less Enmities and Differences, which often proceed from *evil speaking, passionate Reflections, and uncharitable Censures*. For the meek Man is so far from undervaluing, or speaking evil of his Neighbour, that he prefers him to himself, and endeavours to do him all the Offices of Respect and Kindness that he can. And lastly, the *patient, forbearing, benevolent Carriage* of the meek Christian to his *Adversary*, is that which gives him, in his own Mind and Conscience, not only a great Satisfaction, but a great Joy; and it is also an excellent Means of making up the Difference,

ference, and reconciling the Enmity, so as that the Adversary from thence *becomes a Friend*; and if he have any thing of an ingenuous Temper, cannot help becoming so; for there is a strange attractive Power in Meekness. Frequent Experience shews that Patience in enduring Affronts and Injuries, and that Christian Spirit of returning Good for Evil, has blunted the Edge even of the keenest Malice, and restored Affection and Friendship betwixt those Persons, who by any other Means might possibly never have been reconcil'd; and upon these Accounts the Meek may very well be said to inherit the Earth.



C H A P. IV.

Of Hungring and Thirsting after
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATT. V. 6.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and
thirst after righteousness, for they shall
be filled.*N this Beatitude there are two
Things worthy of our Consi-
deration.*First, The Character of the Persons
concerned.**Secondly, The Reward, or particular
Blessedness appointed to them.*

I. First the Persons here described,
and they are those *which hunger and
thirst after righteousness*. And here I
shall (1.) explain to you the Meaning of
Righteousness, and then (2.) of *hungring
and thirsting after Righteousness*.

(1.) *Righte-*

(1.) *Righteousness*, as the Word is used in the New Testament, when it's spoken of as Matter of *Duty*, is sometimes taken for the particular Virtue of *Justice*, or the rendering to every Man his due. In this Sense it is to be understood in those scriptural Catalogues, where it is reckon'd amongst other Christian Virtues. *Thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, &c.* And again, *follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, &c.* Of this Virtue it was, together with the Subjects of Temperance and Judgment to come, that St. *Paul* so effectually reasoned at the Bar before *Felix* the Governor. And in this Sense it respects not only particular Men, but also Bodies and Societies; as well the greater of Cities, Kingdoms and Common-wealths, as the less, of Relations and Families: For Justice is the Bond and Cement of them all. It is this Justice which governs and obeys, rewards and punishes, witnesseth and determines, buys and sells, and runs thro' all the Offices and Employments, all the Trusts, and all the Affairs of the World, in which Men are concerned one with another; and the Rule of it, is not only the Law of God in general Precepts, or

1 Tim. 6.

11.

2 Tim. 2.

22.

or secretly impress'd upon the Mind and Conscience; but likewise the natural Equity of the thing, and the Laws of Men, and the Commands of Governors and Superiors, applying the general Law of God to particular Cases and Circumstances. This is one Sense of Righteousness, to which many Places both in the Old and New Testament refer.

But then there is *another* Sense of *Righteousness*, which is of frequent use in the New Testament, and which I rather take to be the Meaning of it in the Text before us, that is as comprehending the *whole Christian Religion*. And so to walk before God in Righteousness, is to live according to the most perfect way of Religion, which Christ has establish'd in the World. This includes the Virtue of Justice, as one Particular among the rest; but such an one, and of so great Influence and Extent, that you see it has given Name to the whole. And indeed all Religion, as it is compleated and perfected by Christ, is no more than that very Justice which we owe to God, to others, and to our selves; and therefore by the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, it is called *the word of righteousness*; and by St. Peter the *way of righteousness*. It were bet-

Heb. 5. 13.

2 Pet. 2. 21.

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ter for them (says he, speaking of Apostates, and Revolters from Christianity) *not to have known the way of righteousness, viz. the Gospel of Christ, than after they have known it to turn from the holy Commandments delivered unto them.* But this is not the full Extent of this Sense of Righteousness; for as it comprises the *whole Christian Duty*, so it likewise includes the *Rewards* of it: Righteousness is put for *Immortality and Glory*, as well as for the Way to it. And therefore St. Paul calls the Hope of Glory the *Hope of Righteousness*; for we *through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.* And so likewise the Crown of Glory he calls the *Crown of Righteousness*: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* For as the State of the Gospel is call'd the Kingdom of Heaven, not only because it came from Heaven, and leads us thither; but likewise because it is a State of the same Kind, it is but one Kingdom, tho' in Heaven it has greater Majesty and Perfection: So also the Reward of Righteousness hereafter is called Righteousness, because it is of the same Kind; it is Righteousness in its full Growth

Gal. 5. 5.

2 Tim. 4.
8.

Growth and Stature. And that Description which the Apostle makes of the Kingdom of God upon Earth, or the State of the Gospel, that it is Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, may more properly be apply'd to the Kingdom of God in Heaven, where there is the Perfection of Righteousness, an undisturb'd and absolute Peace, and the Fulness of Joy at the right Hand of God for ever. But,

Secondly, I am to shew you the Meaning of *Hungring and Thirsting after Righteousness*. And by this may be understood a vehement Inclination and Disposition of Mind, for the Advancement of Righteousness; not as it implies only the particular Virtue of *Justice*, but that more extensive Kingdom of Righteousness and Holiness, which the Lord Jesus came to establish upon Earth, and will compleat and reward in Heaven. And this,

(1.) Within our selves, in our own Hearts and Lives. It is an earnest Appetite and Endeavour of the Mind to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to follow his Example, and to be counted worthy of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. It is a longing Desire

to mortifie all the Remains of Sin in us, to get the perfect Mastery of our Affections and Passions, and to bring them under an entire subjection to the Law of God; to encrease daily in all Christian Virtues, and to walk in every thing as becomes the Gospel. It is a fervent Breathing after greater Degrees of Charity, Humility, Patience, and all other

Phil. 3. 13. *Graces; forgetting those things that are behind, the Pitch of Goodness we have already attain'd to, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, that Perfection in Piety and Virtue which alone can satisfy a generous Christian, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; a weaning our Hearts from this World, and fixing them upon that happy State where we shall sin no more, but be establish'd for ever in consummate Righteousness. In short, 'tis such an eager and sincere Desire of the Mind after all this, as answers to the Thirst and Hunger of the Body; and accordingly with respect to these Appetites, the Gospel of Christ is called in the New Testament both Bread and Water.*

John 6. 32. *Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, says our Saviour, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

And

And again, *The water I shall give him,* John 4. 14. *shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* Now if the Kingdom of Grace be describ'd by Meat and Drink, the Appetites of Hunger and Thirst may very well be apply'd to represent the Desire of the Soul after it. But this Desire is not confin'd to the Dominion of Grace in our own Hearts; for,

(2.) It extends also to a diligent and earnest Endeavour for promoting Righteousness in *others*, in the Places or Neighbourhood where we live, or even through all the World if we were able. It is an hearty Desire that the *Kingdom* of Christ may come, and his will be done in earth as it is in heaven: That Religion may prevail on every side of us by a sincere and universal Practice, that the Piety and Virtue of all who call themselves Christians may in some Measure come up to the Purity and Excellence of their Profession, and that all Immorality, Vice and Prophaneness may be every where suppress'd, by what ever charitable, just and prudent Methods it may be done; that the Name of God may be honoured, his Worship and Sacraments frequented, and that the Power of his Laws may influence as far as that

of his Providence to Mankind. Now such an Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness as this, will shew it self in a true Christian, by a pious Industry and chearful Contribution toward all good Works which may promote Religion; for it is not only a lazy lifeless Wish that all things were better than they are, but a vigorous Application as much as in him lyes to make them so, by taking care for the due Instruction and Discipline of his own Family in Matters which concern their spiritual Interest; a careful and religious Education of his Children, a charitable and discreet advising and reprov- ing of his Friends, the giving away good Books for Instruction of the Poor and Ignorant, or reclaiming the Vicious, the forwarding Charity-Schools, contribu- ting to foreign Missions for the Conver- sion of Infidels, and in short, the endea- vouring by all wise and useful Ways to bring Religion into Practice, and to dis- countenance Vice, and break the Power of Wickedness in the World. 'Tis such an earnest Disposition and Application to all this as may be called an *Hungring* and *Thirsting* after it, and that in Imitation of our blessed Lord, *whose meat it was to do the will of God, and to finish his work.*

John 4. 34.

II. I am now to shew you that those *are truly blessed*, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, in the Sense above explained. And this will appear to you by the Consideration of that particular Blessing promised to them, *for they shall be filled*. By which is to be understood these three things.

(1.) That such as thus hunger and thirst after Righteousness shall be sure to *obtain what they desire*. And this,

First, With regard to himself and his own Spiritual Improvement. As it is a great Torment to a Man to desire vehemently, and labour earnestly, and yet to be disappointed, so it is, on the other hand, a great Felicity and Blessing to have his Desires answered, and his Endeavours crowned with Success. And there is no Man so secure of that, as he who places his Affections on things above. The great Design of God from the beginning of the World was, that all Mankind might serve him in Holiness and Righteousness, and be accordingly rewarded by him; and he in his eternal Wisdom has contrived wonderful Ways to effect this. He has imprinted the Law of Righteousness upon the Hearts and Consciences of Men, he has bound it up with their Reason

and Understanding; he has sent his Son into the World to promote the Practice of it, both by Instructions and his own Example; by his Holy Spirit he begins the good Work of Grace where it is not, and cherishes it where it is begun; he is concerned for the neglect of Righteousness, and waits long and patiently 'till it be undertaken and accomplish'd; and in a word, he offers Grace and Salvation, and invites us earnestly to accept of it, and has instructed us by written Laws and Precepts in the way of Righteousness: And can we imagine, after all, that he will refuse it to such as heartily desire and endeavour after it? We cannot say so much for the Blessings of this present Life, a Man is not sure to obtain what he Desires and Endeavours after of the

Eccl. 9. 11. things of this World. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battel to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happen to them all. Tho' Art and Industry do naturally tend to make Men rich, yet they are often blasted in the Event. Experience is a standing Evidence of this, that neither Fraud nor Honesty, Righteousness nor Unrighteousness, the most

most likely Endeavours nor the most diligent Application, can effectually command the Things of this World. But it is not so with the Blessings which are better worth enjoying. There is no defeat in the Endeavours after *Righteousness*. A Man cannot be disappointed who labours *to be virtuous*; the love and desire of the thing does naturally enforce the Practice, and the Practice brings on the Habit, and the Habit is continually strengthened by the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, 'till it be finally confirmed and rewarded in Glory. God often refuses to hear the Prayers even of a good Man, when he prays for Temporal Blessings, and he refuses it in Kindness; but he never refuses to grant the Request of Spiritual Blessings, at least he never does it in Mercy. *If thou criest after knowledge*, Prov. 2. 3. *says Solomon, and liftest up thy voice* 4. 5. *for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity, and every good path.* God, like a wise and affectionate Father, will only give us those things which are good and profitable

able

Matth. 7.
11.

able for us; and those he will not refuse us. *If ye being evil, says our Saviour, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.* And what are these good Things? Are they the good things of this Life? These indeed are at his Disposal, and he does many times bestow them upon those that ask him; but not always. St. *Luke* acquaints us what that good Thing is, which God will not deny to those who ask it of him, and that is the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, to make those good who desire to be so; *How much more shall your heavenly father give the holy spirit to those that ask him?* For so this Evangelist relates that Passage. Men may indeed render themselves incapable of this Gift, and so be rejected when they pray for it; but God deals thus only with obstinate and rebellious Sinners, who by a long habitual Course of gross and willful Sin have so far quenched the Spirit, that it will never again kindle in their Hearts, and in Judgment he rejects their Prayer, because they have all their Lives rejected the Tenders of his Grace and Mercy, and their Repentance now is probably not sincere;

Luke 11.
13.

Matth. 7.
21, 22, 23,
&c.

1 Thes. 5.
19.

cere ; but they are frightened into it by the near Approach of Death, and Thoughts of Hell, and Stings of an upbraiding Conscience, which foretells their Doom. It is *the Proud* only whom God *resists*, the Men who either scornfully despise Religion, or think they have enough of it already: But still *he gives more Grace to the humble*, to such as are sensible of their own Infirmities, delight in Virtue, and long to be what God would have them. If therefore you have not out-sinned the Grace of God by a long and obstinate Resistance, if you are desirous yet to be reconciled to God, and to return into the way of Righteousness, and will endeavour heartily to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, try whether God will not accept you. Encounter that Lust which is the strongest, which has hitherto led you Captive upon all Occasions; watch that Temptation which does the most easily prevail upon you, and see whether it be not possible (through that Grace of God which you may have for asking) to withstand it first, and after to subdue it. Be assured that God will never deny you the Assistance of his Spirit, if you pray for it heartily and improve it vigorously. *He therefore that hungers and*

Jam. 4.6.

Luke 3.8.

and thirsts after Righteousness (understanding by it his own Sanctification and Improvement) *shall be filled*, shall certainly obtain what he desires, in all *necessary Measures* at least, even in this present Life. And,

Secondly, Extending this Desire to others as to well as our selves; to the promoting Piety and Virtue, the Fear of God, and Practice of Religion in our Families, Neighbourhood, or elsewhere, by all those charitable Methods mentioned towards the Conclusion of the first general Head of this Discourse, where we describ'd that Branch of hungring and thirsting after Righteousness, we have good Reason to hope for such a Blessing of God upon it, that we may *see the travel of our Souls and be satisfied*; may see it do *some good* at least, tho' not so much as we desire; and that at length we may meet with many Souls in Glory, who will bless God for making us the happy Instruments of rescuing them from their Sins, and bringing them to Heaven. But this I shall not enlarge upon, because the *Event* is not so sure as the *Reward of our Labours* in it, and the *Piety of our Desires* are: For they may reject the Means of Grace, tho' we may offer them,

them, and be rewarded for our good Endeavours. But farther,

(2.) Those that hunger and thirst after Righteousness *shall be filled*, and in being so be blessed, they shall find a *comfortable relish and satisfaction* in what they do obtain. They shall not only get what they desire, but they shall be *satisfied* with what they get. It is the Vanity of all the Blessings of this Life, that tho' enjoyed they do not answer Expectation, they fall short of what we thought 'em, and leave us still uneasy: For as they are only perishing Enjoyments of this World, they cannot in the very Nature of them satisfy the Hunger and Thirst of an Immortal Soul; in the Taste and Relish of them they are embitter'd with many unpleasant Mixtures of Trouble in one kind or other, and in the Possession of them uncertain things, of which an hundred Accidents may deprive us, and therefore we cannot have an absolute Contentment in them. But he who hungers and thirsts after Righteousness, as he *always obtains*, so he obtains what is *well worth his Labour*. Every Grace he obtains, and every sinful Inclination he subdues, is no less than a new Conveyance to him of Eternal Glory, a new Assurance

Assurance of his Right and Title; and this being what his very Soul was made for, must be entirely agreeable to all his Faculties, and thoroughly satisfying. The more he advances in the Way of Righteousness, the more he is refreshed, the farther he travels he is the less weary: The Pursuit may be oft difficult, but the Reflection is pleasant. God has so fitted Religion to the Minds of Men, that tho' there be Labour in the Undertaking there is always a Relish goes along with it. The conquering of an evil Habit, or a strong Temptation, is like the conquering of a powerful Enemy, difficult to perform, but when accomplished fills us with mighty Joy and Triumph. Nor is it less delightful to do Good than it is to resist and conquer Evil. What a Refreshment is it to the charitable Man to help the afflicted! His Alms is not so acceptable to the poor Creature he relieves, as the Religion of it is to himself. But his Satisfaction is then at the highest, when he sees Religion flourishing abroad, the Kingdom of Christ gaining Ground, Impiety and Vice put out of Countenance, and the Slaves of Satan rescu'd into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God: When he discerns the Characters of Goodness and
Virtue

Virtue in his Children, for whom he has so long pray'd, and on whom he has bestow'd so much pious Pains to instruct them in the Ways of Virtue; and when he sees the Neighbourhood, or any Soul in it, effectually reform'd and taught by his Example, Friendship, Influence, Reproofs or Charity, it gives him something of that holy Joy on Earth, which Angels have in Heaven, where they are said to *rejoyce* over the repenting Sinner.

(3.) And lastly, to compleat the Blessing; this Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness shall be filled with an *everlasting* Fulness in the World to come: For here the Appetite of the Soul is rather refreshed than filled: The Righteousness of the present Life is but imperfect, and he who loves it best and labours most after it, will still be sensible of many Defects and Failures in it, and these are no little Abatement of his Satisfaction. He observes also, beside his own Deficiency, so much Unrighteousness abroad, so great a Neglect of the Religion of Christ, even amongst Christians, so many Dishonours done to our holy Master by those who profess to follow him, and to be his Servants, that the good Man is still more uneasy upon a publick

publick Account. For as his Desires after Righteousness are not restrained to his own private and personal Case, but enlarge themselves to the Encrease and Propagation of Righteousness in the World, so if he live in an Age in which the Righteousness of the Gospel is not only neglected, but ridiculed and laughed at, and the Religion of Christ in the Power and Practice of it, like himself, condemned and crucified, he cannot but be under great Disturbance and Concern, notwithstanding the Comfort of his own Sincerity. But when that happy Time shall come, when he shall *enter into the joy of his Lord, amongst the spirits of just men made perfect*, not only his own Righteousness, which here is in its Infancy, weak and expos'd, in a State of Warfare, furrounded with many Enemies, attack'd, and sometimes worsted by many Temptations, shall be advanced to a full Strength and Perfection, be placed in an entire Security, and rewarded with eternal Glory; but he shall see the *Righteousness of all good People* likewise perfected; he shall see an universal Righteousness, and that in its full Lustre and Beauty, in an innumerable Company of unfinning Angels, triumphant Martyrs, and compleated Saints.

Saints. There his Satisfaction shall not drop upon him in small Showers, which serve to refresh him only for a time, but he shall drink out of *Rivers of Pleasure* at the right-hand of God. There shall be nothing there to tempt or to offend the Righteous, their Victory over Sin shall be absolute, their Triumph everlasting. They shall *indeed be filled with Righteousness*; for there every Man shall be filled according to his Measure, and tho' there be different Proportions, there will be no Imperfection. And thus it shall continue as long as the Sun of Righteousness endures; for they who shall be thought worthy to meet the Lord Jesus in his Kingdom of Glory, *shall remain for ever with him.*

Matth. 13.

41.

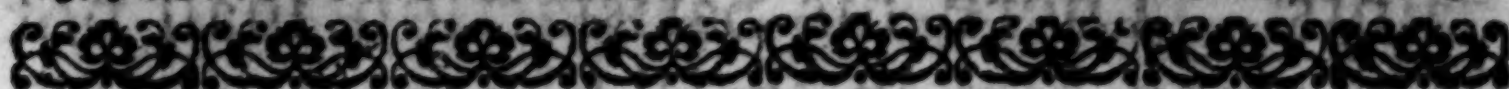
1 Thes. 4.

17.



L

CHAP.



CHAP. V.

Of MERCY.

MATT. V. 7.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.



HAVING gone through the four first Beatitudes, we come now to the *Fifth*, and shall consider it in the same Method, the Text falling into the same general Division, *viz.* The *Persons* described by their Moral Character, [the Merciful,] and that Correspondent *Blessing* pronounced upon them as their Reward, the Assurance of obtaining Mercy for themselves.

I. *First*, For the Consideration of the *Persons*, and these are the *Merciful*: And in order to know what is included in that Character, we must consider the proper Objects of Mercy, (which may be reduc'd to three, the *Miserable* or *Unfortunate*, the *Injurious*, and the *Guilty*;))

Guilty;) together with those Acts of Mercy which are suitable to their respective Cases, and ought to be shewn towards them.

(1.) To begin with the Miserable or Unfortunate; whatever the Circumstances are which make them so, the Instances of Mercy towards them are as follows.

1. The being inwardly affected with *Pity* and *Commiseration* of them. Humanity it self requires this Tenderneſs, 'tis wrought into the very frame of our Natures, and none but ſavage, ignoble and diſingenuous Spirits can be without it. The Senſe and Inter-eſt of the common Condition of Mankind excites it, expoſed (as all of us are) to Pain and Sickneſs, and unhappy Accidents, to Poverty and Contempt, to Loſſes and Diſappointments, and to whatever elſe we ſee our Neighbours ſuffer; and tho' at preſent all is eaſie with us, we know not how ſoon their Caſe may be our own; and therefore ſhould commiſerate *them* as we would have others pity *us* upon a like Occaſion. 'Tis very fitly urged upon us to this purpoſe by the Author to the *Hebrews*, Remember *them that are in bonds as bound with them; and them which ſuffer adverſity,*

Heb. 13.3.

as being your selves also in the body. And certainly 'tis a very great Argument of the Goodness of God to us, that tho' he would not take away the Consequence of Sin, the Calamities and Afflictions of this mortal Life, lest we should forget his Justice and our own Demerits; yet he was pleased so far to pity us, as to imprint upon our Nature this generous, this divine Impression of his own, that we might not be without some Comfort *one from another*, (as well as from his gracious Promises and our eternal Hopes) to qualifie and mitigate our Sorrows. For this Experience teaches us, that if the Sufferer meet but with a compassionate Ear that gives attention to his Story, it is a mighty Easement to his Mind, it takes off half his Burden, he is but half Unhappy. St. Paul therefore, to strengthen the Obligations of Nature by those of Religion, requires

Rom. 12. *US to weep with those that weep; to be*
 15. *kind to one another, tender-hearted; and*
 Eph. 4. 32. *to put on as the elect of God bowels of*
 Col. 3. 12. *mercy.* And God, to give us an Exam-

ple of it in the Case of *Israel*, was pleased to express himself with this affectionate Tendernefs, *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember*

ber him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. And according to this, the Prophet *Isaiah*, in the Name of the Captivity, addressees himself to God. *Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and thy mercy towards me?* Our Saviour also fully expressed this Disposition in himself, when taking a Prospect of *Jerusalem*, then indeed in Prosperity, but (as he foresaw the Judgments hastening down upon it) ready to be devour'd and laid waste by the destroying *Romans*, he fell into a sudden weeping, and cried out over it, *If thou hadst known, (or oh that thou hadst known) the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.* This therefore is a very natural and necessary Expression of Mercy to those who are in an afflicted State, let their Suffering be what it will; and 'tis indeed the least we can do for them. Pity, without any thing more, is but a cheap Relief, a Charity which costs us nothing; and tho' it be of great Use toward the Comfort of the unhappy Sufferer, yet in most Cases 'tis far from being the whole Extent of Mercy due to them. For,

2. We must add the more substantial Benefit of *Assistance* and *Support*, according as the Nature of the Affliction requires. If Pain or Sickness be the Case, and we know any thing which may give them Ease, or contribute to restore their Health, we ought to acquaint them, or supply them with it. If a sudden Accident have happened to them, as to the Traveller mentioned in the Gospel, who was robbed, and stripped, and wounded, we, like the good *Samaritan*, should readily give all the Help we can, that they may be provided for and taken care of. If a Man's Reputation be unjustly blasted, if a worthy and a virtuous Person should be undeservedly contemned and vilified, we should not only pity him, but labour also to vindicate his Character, and set him right in the Esteem of the World, so far as we are able. And the like we are to do proportionably in other Cases; and especially in that most common one of *Want* or *Poverty*. St. James has an excellent Passage to this Purpose, *If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body,* what

Luke 10.
30 to 38.

Jam. 2. 15,
16.

what does it profit? The Apostle here *supposes* Pity, or a compassionate Sense of their Suffering, but shews that *that alone is not enough*; there must be a Charity more substantial, an actual and real Supply, so far as our own Circumstances will permit. I shall therefore explain the Assistance or Support to such as are under Poverty in these Particulars.

The first is *Giving*: And thus the Divine Mercy deals with *us*; it does not rest in the bare Language of Affection or Commiseration, but issues in the bestowing something suitable to our present Necessity. And that we may be convinced how great an Obligation lies upon us to this Charity towards our suffering Fellow-Christians, we ought to consider our selves as only *Stewards* Matth. 25. under *God* in all which we enjoy. Our ^{14.} Estates are committed to us by him; the Sovereign Lord of all things, to employ them to our own Subsistence, and that of those who immediately depend upon us in the first place, the Remainder as he shall otherwise direct us. And what Direction has he given in this Matter? He has in innumerable Places of Holy Scripture, as it were *drawn Bills upon us* for the *Poor*. He has undertaken

ken to provide for such as are in Want; but how? Not by raining down upon them Bread from Heaven, or by miraculous flights of Quails, as he fed the *Israelites* in the Wilderness; not by as great a Miracle upon their Garments, that they should not decay or wear out, as he did to that People there; but by reserving and requiring Portions from the Rich, out of what he has put into their Hands, for the Use and Maintenance of the Poor. And therefore *St. Paul* bids *Timothy* charge them that are rich in this World that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

Secondly, Another Particular included in the Words Assistance and Support, is *Lending*; an Instance of Mercy more to be consider'd than it usually is; for I do not here mean the Lending for Increase, but in Charity: Not for our own Profit, but the seasonable Advantage and Supply of such as stand in need. This charitable Lending, as wholly abstracted from Self-Interest, is also required of us by our Saviour, as an *Act of Mercy*; *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again*; and then it follows in the next Verse, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is merciful*. The Meaning of

of the Precept here, *to lend, hoping for nothing again*, seems to be plainly and naturally this; that where a Person under the Pressure of great Necessity and Want shall come to us and desire to borrow such a Sum of Mony as his present Circumstances require, (provided we can spare it, and if the Providence of God should render the Person unable to repay us, can well enough bear the Loss of it,) we ought not to refuse such a reasonable Charity as this, or be afraid of lending, because of the probable Hazard we run of never being paid again; but that on the contrary, we should freely and cheerfully supply him, with a Resolution to lose it, if God should disable the Person to whom we lend, so as that he cannot without the utmost Inconvenience repay us. But that this may not encourage idle and disorderly *borrowing*, St. Paul inserts a Caution proper to be taken Notice of, *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*; ^{Rom. 13. 8.} which I take to be as much a Restraint of careless and inconsiderate Borrowing, as the other Precept is of unmerciful Denying.

A *Third* Particular of Mercy, which is near of kin to that which went before, and equally imply'd in the Assistance and
Sup-

Support due to such as are really poor, is the voluntary *Release* and *Quittance* of such Payments as cannot be expected, but by Severities which must entirely ruin the poor Debtor. Those who have the Power of exercising this Instance of Mercy, are to proceed by the Rules of *Necessity*, rather than of *Contract*. And that it is required of us upon such Occasions, we may reasonably infer from the Parable of the *unmerciful*

Matth. 18. *Servant*, who when his Lord had frankly
24. &c. remitted to *him* a Debt which he was by no means able to pay, laid hold of his poor Fellow-Servant, who owed him indeed a trifling Sum, but was as little able to discharge it as the other his ten thousand Talents; and, notwithstanding all Submissions and Entreaties, barbarously cast him into Prison for it. At which unworthy Proceeding, his Lord (by whom Almighty God is represented to us in the Parable) revok'd the Remission of what that cruel Wretch had stood indebted in, and reproaching him with these Words, *O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity upon thee?* He dealt accordingly with him, and cast him into Prison,

Prison, 'till he should pay all which was due to him. It were well if this part of Mercy also were more in practice amongst Christians, for surely 'tis a Scandal to us that our Prisons are every where so filled with miserable Debtors, who want not the *Will*, (but through mere Poverty and Misfortunes) the *Ability* to discharge the Debt, while their Families in the mean time are forced to beg or starve. I question not, our Laws design'd Imprisonment as a Punishment for *Knavery*, and not for *Poverty*; this latter being in it self no Crime; and therefore, tho' indeed the Laws have not provided for this Case by any Exception, it cannot but be very hard and barbarous to throw Men into Goal for what they *would* but *cannot* pay, a Debt which they have not contracted with any Knavish Intention, or disabled themselves for the Payment of it by Vice and Extravagance. What good does the Possession and Confinement of a *Debtor's Body*, who is in such Circumstances that his Creditor cannot be repaid, tho' the Prisoner ever so much desire it? Nay farther, does not such a Confinement still the more disable him from paying? For supposing an honest Intention, (and a Christian should always be ready to believe

lieve and hope the best of his Neighbour,) if he were at Liberty, and Time were given him, he might by his Labour and Industry be paying off the Debt by little and little; But under Imprisonment he can do nothing but get a bare Subsistence, and very often not that without the Charity of others: So that if the Creditor can hope to be repaid at all by such a Man, it must be somewhere else than in a Goal. And if the Debt be such that even *in Liberty* the poor Creature is not likely to be able to discharge it, Religion will teach us what to do, *be merciful and forgive the whole.*

A *Fourth* Particular of Assistance is *helping the Fatherless and Oppressed to their Right*, so far as it lyes in our Power to forward it: And this may be done
 Psal. 82. 3. (as a Magistrate having the proper Cognizance of the Cause,) by doing them
 Isa. 1. 17. Justice in the course of Law; as a pri-
 Job 29. 11, 12, 13. vate Man and a Neighbour, by Interces-
 Jer. 22. 3. sion, Advice, and several other Methods which a truly charitable Mind will easily think of upon Occasion, and as readily apply on the other Hand. Solomon warns us, *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain* (the Reason is the same with Respect to any other
 Prov. 24. 11, 12. other

ther Injury or Oppression, by the Violence of Lawless Men) *If thou sayest, behold we knew it not* (excuse an uncompassionate Carelessness by a pretended Ignorance,) *doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every Man according to his works?*

But to proceed; we must not only pity and assist the Miserable, we must also,

3. *Pray for them.* Assistance is not always in our Power to give them; but whether it happen to be so or not, we may still recommend them heartily in our Prayers to God, who is the Fountain and the Spring of all Supply, beseeching *him* that he would give them such Assistance and Relief as is suitable to their Condition. For *he is the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort; he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He is their refuge and strength, a very present Help in Trouble: A father of the fatherless, a judge of the widows; he shall deliver the poor and needy, and him that hath no helper.* Tho' we are unable to help them, God is not, and therefore it is a very proper Act of Mercy in us, to re-

2 Cor. 1. 3.
Psal. 145. 9.
Psal. 46. 1.
Psal. 68. 5.
Psal. 72. 12.

represent their Case to *him*, and ply the Throne of Mercy on their Behalf. And this we have fair Encouragement to do, both from what these Texts assure us of his ready and merciful Disposition to relieve his suffering Creatures, and from the Assurance given us by St. *James*, Jam. 5.16. that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*; and that, as appears by the Context, is particularly declared to us in the Case of praying for others under Affliction. It is also more extensive than our actual Pity and Relief can possibly be; for these can only reach those whose particular Troubles we see or hear of; but our Prayers may extend to all who are in Storms or Shipwracks; all who are sick or in Pain, oppressed or Captives, and in general to all who are under any Affliction, tho' we know not, nor ever are like to know their Persons. And this is an Act of Mercy to them, which whether it avail the Sufferers or not, will certainly be rewarded in us by our heavenly Father.

(2.) I come now to the second Sort of Objects of our Mercy; the Injurious, and such as have done us Wrong. And with respect to these our merciful Temper is to shew it self,

1. In

I. In Pardon and Forgiveness, abstaining from all Attempts and Projects of Revenge, in Imitation of that God, who chose out this as the Character by which he most affected to be known and worshipped. *The Lord, merciful* Exod. 34-6, 7. *and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* If he who is every Day provoked by the prophane Contempt, the repeated Blaphemies and Impieties of wicked Men, (those wretched and despicable Creatures spurning at the infinite Majesty of their Creator, who could make them miserable for it beyond all Expression, with one angry Look) will nevertheless bear long with them, and takes more Delight in forgiving, than even the most malicious of them do in offending; how much more Reason is there that *we* should bear with *one another*, who are all of us form'd out of the same Clay, and subject to the same Infirmities and Passions, and for our many Offences against God, deserve not only *his* Wrath, but the Enmity of the *whole Creation* against us! But the *Reasonableness* of our forgiving one another is not all: Our Saviour has made it *necessary* for us so to do, as ever we expect Forgiveness

Matth. 6.
12.

ness at his Hands, which he has taught us to pray for only upon that express Condition: For so the Petition runs in the Lord's Prayer, *Forgive us our Debts* [our Trespases or Offences] *as we forgive our Debtors* [those who offend or injure us.] We must desire to be forgiven, only in like manner as we forgive. So that whoever pretends to ask Pardon for himself of God, with Malice in his Heart against his Neighbour, does in *Effect* (whatever his Words may import to the contrary) desire that he *may not be forgiven*, because he will not forgive others. But that the Forgiveness here urged upon us may be indeed the Indication of a merciful Temper, it must be *voluntary*, from an inward, free and generous Principle in the Forgiver; for so much as a Man is pressed and constrained by exterior Circumstances, the Importunities of Friends, or the deep Submissions and Entreaties of the Offender, so much is detracted from the Honour and Value of the Action: Nor does it obtain the End of Forgiveness, which is Reconciliation; for a Compliance so extorted from us may be false and so revokable, and then it is no more than a slow and dissembled Malice, Resentment smothered up a while in Embers,

bers, to kindle a fresh Flame hereafter, when Opportunity or some new Incentive shall encourage it, which is wholly inconsistent with true Forgiveness. It must be *sincere* and *faithful*, not like the pretended Reconciliation of Jacob's Family with the *Sichemites*, waiting only an Advantage for a more effectual and irresistible Revenge. There must be a perfect Discharge, without any thoughts of Revenge or Retaliation hereafter for the Injury then supposed to be forgiven. But the *second*, and the larger step in Mercy to those who injure us, is still behind, *viz.*

2. The *doing all good and beneficial Offices* to them, how great soever the Mischief or Injustice is which they have done us. This is expressly the Law of Christ delivered with his own Mouth. *Ye have heard (says he) that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.* Nature and Self-interest teach us to be kind to those who are kind to us, but the Christian must go farther than Nature and Self-interest will lead him; he must do *more than others,*

Gen. 34.
13, &c.

Matth. 5.
43, 44.

M

thers,

Luke 6.35.
Matth. 5.
45.

others, he must return good Offices to those who do him ill ones, and that Good in particular which is most contrary to the Evil he has suffered. And this in Imitation also of the most perfect Mercy and Beneficence of God, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil; makes his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. He is daily pouring out his Benefits and Blessings upon those who are daily provoking him, and even while the whole Race of Mankind were in open Rebellion against him, sent his Son from Heaven to die upon the Cross a Sacrifice and Satisfaction for them. From which St. John rationally draws this Inference, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

(3.) There is yet a third Branch of Mercy which has not been considered here, and can be now but very briefly. It is that which the Prince, or his subordinate Judges and Magistrates, would think proper to shew, in Moderation of the Severity of human Laws. The Objects of this Mercy are the *Guilty*, such as have broke the Laws, and are fallen under the judicial Cognizance of them thereupon. The Supream Power in all Governments has an undoubted Right

Right of *pardoning* Offenders after Conviction, and in the Case of pitiable Circumstances, where the Offence is not of very dangerous Consequence, or where other good Considerations of Equity, Mercy, or State Policy intervene not, may very commendably be exerted. Inferior Judges and Magistrates have not such a Power indeed, for they must do their Office in the Execution of the Laws committed to them. And yet even they also in some less Cases have a discretionary Latitude allowed them, provided that in general the Laws which they are sworn to execute be faithfully and impartially put in Execution, so that Vice and ill Manners may receive a due and publick Discountenance. For I account it no Partiality in a Magistrate to pass by the legal Punishment of a young or unaccustomed Offender, and to try whether the *Warning* given him by his first Conviction, may not as well reclaim him as a *Penalty*. There are other mollifying Circumstances which may give a Title to Mercy now and then; but I cannot stay to determine nicely upon them, and therefore only recommend this Maxim, *That Conscience and Mercy act by one another*; that neither an inflexible Severity

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verity

Rom. 13.
3, 4.

verity prevail without any Distinction, (provided the End of the Law may otherwise be duly answered) nor yet a careless and unfaithful Negligence or indiscreet Good-nature destroy the Bonds of Government. For the Magistrate is ordained of God, *a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil*; and in many Cases Punishment is the most proper Mercy for him to express, as it may reclaim the Offender, who will not be wrought upon by gentler Methods, and may prevent or restrain others by his Example.

Thus we have gone through the *First* general Head, the Description of the Persons blessed [*the Merciful*]. We are next to undertake the *Second*, and that is,

II. The Blessing which attends upon them, [*They shall obtain Mercy.*]

That we may rightly understand the Nature of this promised Blessing, we are to take it along with us, that tho' Mercies of a *Temporal* as well a *Spiritual* Nature may be included in it, the *present Life* is not the *only* nor the *principal* Stage of the Divine Mercy: X For the Curse of Death being denounced upon the whole Posterity of *Adam*,
and

and this Curse containing within the Bowels of it all the various Evils and Calamities to which our present State of Being is obnoxious, the *Wisdom of God* has not thought fit to exempt even his best and most faithful Servants en-^{Heb. 12.} tirely from *these Scourges*, tho' his *Mer-*^{6, 7.} cy has provided a way to remove and set aside their *Guilt*. The Paradise and perfect Happiness of good Men being reserved to a future and a better Life, less Care is taken for distinguishing Communications of Divine Favour while we continue in this World, where, generally speaking, *All things come a-*^{Eccl. 9. 2.} *like to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.* And that we might not flatter our selves with an Expectation, that under the Gospel-state the Case of good Men should be alter'd for the better, as to outward Prosperity and Comfort, our Lord foretold his Disciples that they should suffer Hardships and Indignities in great abundance, that they must not depend upon a Life of Ease, and Wealth, and Reputation, but should be exposed to sharp and cruel Persecutions, to the loss of all Things, and to Death it self. And Experience shews us daily that the best of Christians are no more exempted from

Pain or Sickneſs, Poverty, Reproach, or any other the common Miſeries of Life, than the moſt impious and ungodly are. Their Treafure is above, and there it is, before the Seat of Mercy it ſelf, the Throne of the Divine Preſence in Heaven, that the Rewards of Mercy are chiefly diſtributed.

Yet is not *this preſent Life* ſhut out from ſome Degrees of ſuch a Diſtribution; and therefore we may ſtill maintain, that more or leſs in *this World*, as well as *that to come*, the Merciful ſhall obtain mercy. We will conſider the Bleſſing,

First, So far as it is obſervable in the *preſent Life*. And here it would be in vain to inſiſt on the common Benefits and Bleſſings enjoy'd in a greater or leſs Degree by all Mankind, as Health, Friends, Subſiſtance, the Fruits of the Earth, &c. (tho' theſe are really Mercies, and only loſe their Character with us, by that which ſhould moſt endear and recommend to us the divine Favour in them, their Frequency and Repetition :) For they are alike poured out upon all ſorts of Men, the Merciful and Unmerciful, the Good and Evil, without Diſtinction. But we ſhall endeavour to ſhew that in ſome Particulars the Merciful are *eminently* and *eſpecially* regarded.

And

And yet we must previously observe, that as the several Acts of human Mercy to be rewarded, are not all of them in the same Degree excellent and honourable, but some of them are more so than others; as for Instance in the Case of relieving miserable Persons; every Lender and every Giver, and every Man who puts up a Prayer or joins in the Petitions of the Church for needy and afflicted People, is not alike merciful with others who proceed farther, lend more generously, give more liberally, pray more frequently; nor even these last to be compar'd to those who go farther still, to the forgiving and doing good to their Enemies, which are the brightest Exercises of this Grace — So it is not to be expected that the *Rewards* of their Mercy should be equal. It is enough to secure the Promise in this Case, if God give any thing proportionable to the Mercy shewn by Men to one another; for so the Merciful *do obtain mercy*. And therefore let it be consider'd, that the Distributions of Heaven, tho' they be full of Mercy, are not equally the same to all Persons. Respect is had not only to *single Acts*, or *Habits* of Charity, but also the *Eminence* or *Usefulness* of each of these. He whose

constant Disposition it is to be kind, compassionate and assisting, or to forgive and to do good to his Enemies, is much more valuable in the Sight of God, than he who once or twice perhaps in all his Life attains to the Honour and Practice of this Temper. *Forgiveness* is more than giving of Alms, and doing good to an Enemy more than lending to a necessitous Neighbour, and proportionable to this 'tis probable the Reward may be. These things being premis'd we may go on to observe, that as Almighty God in the Execution of his Judgments frequently inscribes the Sin so legibly upon the Punishment, that Men may easily discern by the Affliction it self for what particular Sin they are afflicted, so he does usually confer his Mercies and Rewards in so proportionable and resembling a Manner, as to point out the particular Virtue for which the Blessing is conferred. Examples we have in these Beatitudes; to the *poor in spirit*, is assign'd a *Kingdom*; to the religious *Mourners*, *Comfort*; to such as *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, *filling* or Satisfaction; and here to the *Merciful* the *obtaining mercy*. But what that Mercy is, which (with respect to *this World*) they shall obtain, or generally do so in the Course

Course of God's Providence, may be briefly summ'd up thus. The *Compassionate* shall find it in the divine Compassion to themselves, supporting and comforting them under their Afflictions by his Holy Spirit, and in due time delivering them when it may be for his Glory and their real Good. To this we may add the Compassion which such, when they are in Trouble, generally find towards them in their Neighbours, who are always apt to pity those who have pity'd them or others. The *charitable* Man who *gives* and *lends* or *freely releases* his Demands upon *Insolvent Debtors*, is generally bless'd by Providence with a remarkable Plenty and Increase in his Estate, or Prosperity and Success in his Affairs. He who is frequently and earnestly *petitioning at the Throne of Mercy* for the miserable and afflicted, may reasonably hope to be heard and accepted when he shall pray for himself, in Troubles of his own. He who *forgives* and *does good to his Enemies*, may often observe that God either *breaks* or *over-rules* their Malice; either pours out a Spirit of Reconciliation and Friendship upon them, or restrains them at least from doing all those ill Offices to which their Inclination prompts them. Now these

Psal. 41.

1, 2, 3.

Prov. 21.

13.

Psal. 37.

25, 26.

Prov. 11.

24, 25.

Luke 6.28.

2 Cor. 9.

8, 9, 10.

Prov. 28.

27.

Rom. 12.

20.

Prov. 16.7.

Psal. 76.10.

these Particulars (which a careful Regard to Providence, and the Administration of the divine Government in the World, will find to be generally true *in Fact*, and the common Issue of things) are all of them such apposite and resembling Rewards, that one may easily perceive the Virtue to which they belong. But the obtaining Mercy in the most full and proper Sense of it is still behind: I mean,

(2.) That Mercy which the Merciful shall obtain of God, when they are called up to *another World*, or in order to their being happy there. ✕ I add this last Clause, because the Pardon of our Sins, and the Acceptance we have with God through Christ, (which is the Foundation of our future Happiness,) is begun in this Life, when true Repentance has prepared us for it; (for so St. Paul speaks of himself, *I obtained mercy*, i. e. the Forgiveness of my former Blasphemy and persecuting the Church of Christ, *because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*;) tho' it be not judicially declared and perfected 'till we appear at the Bar of God, and enter upon *the Life to come*. I chuse therefore to speak of it under this Head, as the Effect of it is not 'till after Death, when we come to be acquitted in due Form

1 Tim. i.
13, 16.

Form by Christ, at the Day of Judgment; and so I understand St. *Paul* when he prays for the charitable *Onesiphorus*, that *he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.* ^{2 Tim. 1. 18.} Now this great Instance of obtaining Mercy, the *Pardon and Forgiveness of our Sins*, we find more especially and expressly promis'd, as the Reward of that Branch of Mercy in a Christian, the Forgiveness of the Wrongs and Injuries done to *him* by others: *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* ^{Matth. 6. 14.} And *When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.* ^{Mark 11. 25.} Not that the forgiving others will without more ado entitle us to Forgiveness, for by the whole Tenor of the New Testament 'tis plain there must be also true Repentance, and the Practice of all other Virtues required of us in the Gospel, without which we shall certainly fail nevertheless of Pardon and Salvation; but Forgiveness is promis'd peculiarly to him who from his Heart forgives his Brother, because he who obeys this Command in hopes of Pardon, will by the same Motive be induced to obey the rest of God's Commands, which are necessary for the obtaining

Matth. 6. taining Forgiveness of Sins. And the
 15. Negative holds always and absolutely
 Matth. 18. true, that let our other Virtues be as
 35. great and as many as they will, if we do
 Mark 11. *not forgive* we shall *not be forgiven*.
 26.

I must add, that notwithstanding the immediate Connexion betwixt the Grace of forgiving others, and the Reward for it, of being our selves forgiven, *Mercy* is such a general Word, that considering it as a Christian *Virtue*, it must not be restrained to that one Branch, the forgiving and doing good to Enemies, but extends also to all the other Parts and Instances of Mercy; and considering it as a *Reward*, it implies not only Pardon and Forgiveness, but all the Consequents thereof, that immense Variety of Happiness, that eternal Spring of Glory and Delights, which shall be the Portion of all pardoned Souls in Heaven. And tho' no good thing we do can *deserve* this Pardon, and the exceeding great Reward which follows thereupon; yet to the Merciful, as such, if they are so on the Score of Conscience and the Command of God, belongs this *valuable Promise*, in whatever way they express that excellent Temper on which the Blessing is entail'd.



CHAP. VI.

Of PURITY of HEART.

MATT. V. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they
shall see God.*

THIS is the *Sixth* in Order of the Beatitudes, and contains in it a farther Character of that Disposition or Temper of Mind which is required under the State of the Gospel; together with an Encouragement or Reward propounded. The Disposition is *Purity of Heart*; the Encouragement thereto, a Promise of the *Sight of God*. We will *first* therefore consider the Meaning and Extent of this Disposition, and *then* the Blessing pronounc'd upon it.

I. *First*, For the Extent and Meaning of this *Purity of Heart* recommended to us in the Text. And for the explaining

ing of this, I shall follow the Observation which Expositors have made in the Case, that things are commonly said to be pure in two Respects; (1.) As they are simple, unmix'd and uncompounded with any other Substance; and (2.) As they are unstain'd and free from any Pollution or Defilement of which they may be capable. Now this being apply'd to the Heart, will give Occasion to a double Argument of Discourse; (1.) Concerning Sincerity and Simplicity, oppos'd to Mixture and Composition; (2.) Concerning Purity, properly so called, as opposite to Pollution or Defilement.

First then, The pure in Heart are the *sincere* and *honest*, such as have but one Heart and one Appearance, exercising an undivided Affection, an undissembled Integrity; oppos'd to those *double-minded Men* St. James speaks of, who are *unstable in all their ways*, and whom he calls upon to *purifie their Hearts*. And this Disposition being respectively to be exercised both towards God, and towards Man, let us take a View of it in relation to both.

I. In relation to God; and as such,

(1.) This Purity of Heart restrains us to the Acknowledgment and Worship
of

of one God only, and forbids Idolatry; for what communion hath light with ^{2 Cor. 6.} darknes? and what concord hath Christ ^{14, 15.} with Belial? The Lord our God is one ^{Deut. 6. 4.} Lord, and we ought to love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. His glory he will not ^{Isa. 42. 8.} give to another, nor his praise to graven images. Now that this may not seem a needless and an useless Topic to insist upon with Christians, who all profess to worship one God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; it will be requisite to take Notice that whatever that Object or Enjoyment is which we inordinately set our Hearts upon, and so unreasonably affect, that we will rather break through the Obedience we owe to God, than cross our Appetite and Desire of it, that thing, whatever it is, is an Idol, and another God to us, and our disorderly Affection to it is Idolatry. Thus St. Paul has expressly taught us in the case of two great Vices, Covetousness and Luxury. Of the first of these, the too eager desire and love of Mony, in that Passage, *Mortifie therefore* ^{Col. 3. 5.} *your members which are on the earth, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* And elsewhere he calls the covetous man an ^{Eph. 5. 5.} idolater.

idolater. Of Luxury or Intemperance, excess in eating and drinking, the same Phil. 3. 18, Apostle gives the same Character; *For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, whose God is their belly; whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.* The covetous Man regards not the Service of God so much as the Encrease of his Riches, he puts his Trust in his Mony, and acknowledges no other Providence than his own, considers it as his only Treasure, his only Happiness and Safeguard, and therefore in truth it is his only God; or if he do sometimes for Fashion sake present himself amongst the Worshippers of the true God, his Heart is still upon his Mony, and 'tis to this he pays his best and most intense Devotion. The *Luxurious* and *Intemperate* do the same by *Pleasure*, as the other does by Riches; their sensual Appetites entirely govern them; the Indulgence of *these* is all the Heaven they know or care for; the Laws of God (and very often the Time which should be spent in the publick Worship of him) are sacrificed to *them*. So that these Men are also Double-Dealers with their Maker whom outwardly they pretend to own; their Appetites are Gods to them as well

well as he, and much more honoured and obey'd. If therefore that be true, as certainly it is, which Christ has told us, that *we cannot serve God and mammon*; Matth. 6. and that of the Apostle, *To whom we*^{24.} *yield our selves servants to obey, his*^{16.} *servants we are to whom we obey*; it must necessarily follow, that so much as we withdraw from the faithful Service of God, and give to any other Object, so much we are guilty of setting up to our selves an Idol or false Deity, notwithstanding all our Pretences to be the Servants of the true God; than which there cannot be a greater Offence against the Faithfulness or Simplicity of Heart, described under the first general Article.

(2.) The same Simplicity of Heart, requires not only that we should *worship God alone*, but also that we *should worship him in the way of his own Appointment*, not affecting Innovations and Will-Worship in his Service, which neither divine Precept, the Example of the Primitive Christians, or the standing Order, Custom, or Direction of the Church, (the Governors of which have Authority from God to appoint the outward Circumstances of Religion, as may be most to Decency and Edification) have prescribed. And it requires also that we

N should

should present to him the entire and uniform Service of all our Faculties, the humble Posture of our Bodies, as well as the sincere Devotion of our Souls, in our Addresses to him, or Attendance upon him. For we read of Christ himself, that he *kneeled down and prayed*,
 Luke 22. and the same is recorded of St. *Stephen*
 4¹. Acts 7.60. also, and St. *Paul*, and the Christian
 Acts 20.36. Congregation with him.
 Acts 21.5.

But farther,

(3.) This Simplicity or Purity of Heart is opposite to all *Hypocrisie* and *Dissimulation* with God. Hypocrisie in the Service of God is either *voluntary* and *study'd*, of which it is to be fear'd there are too many guilty; or it is *involuntary*, proceeding from Ignorance or Carelessness, or the want of Principles and an inward Sense of things, of which they may be truly said to be guilty, who by their Resort to publick Offices, by their Presence at the Prayers and Praises, and Instructions of the Church, and by their outward Gesture and conforming Appearance do seem to worship God, but yet in truth and reality have no inward Sense of what is done, nor any Care and Conscience to understand it. Their Minds are upon the World, upon their secular Business or Diversions,
 and

and it may be worse, projecting for their Lusts and Vices, while they pretend to be worshipping God, who sees into the inmost Corners of their Hearts, and first or last will make them know *he is not to be thus mocked*. We ought not therefore to deceive our selves with the vain Conceit of imposing upon *him*; but whether we are in publick or in private Devotion, attend closely and seriously to what we are then about, to desire inwardly what we pretend in Words to pray for, to exercise real Repentance in the Confessions of Sin; to believe, when we recite the Creed; to bless God from the Bottom of our Hearts, when we sing or repeat the Psalms or other Offices of Praise; to attend with a sincere Aim of being improved and edify'd in Christian Practice, when we read or hear the holy Scriptures, Sermons and good Books; or else we perform a vain, hypocritical and formal Service, which can never please God, or forward our own Salvation. But this Sincerity is not confin'd only to Acts of Devotion, either at Church or any where else, it must extend to our whole Conduct in Religion, at all Times, in all Places, and in all Particulars. We must not only carry a fair Out-side to the World, as if we af-

fected no more than the *Reputation* of being good and virtuous, or put on the *Form* of Godliness to serve *our little Turns* and *Interests* in the World; for such Hypocrites are very often discover'd even in this World, and shall certainly be so with everlasting Shame and Disgrace in that which is to come; but we must be *real* and *ingenuous* in a Matter of so great Concern; we must obey God with an Integrity of *Heart*, as well as *plausible Behaviour*. We must *have respect to all God's commandments*; endeavour to mortifie our *secret Pride* and Lust, our Envy, Censoriousness, Peevishness and sensual Appetites, which are either invisible to the World, and wholly lodg'd within us, or are little taken notice of, and do not expose our Credit amongst Men; as well as abstain from notorious Lewdness, Drunkenness, Swearing and Cursing, Violence or Knavery, and the like, which betray an *outward Contempt* of Religion, and carry Disgrace along with them. We must not pretend to *compound* with God and Virtue, retaining our most agreeable and beloved Sins, and shaking off the rest; nor must we content our selves with Tithing *Mint, Anise and Cummin*, being very exact in the ceremonial, or less

less substantial Parts of our Duty, and *neglecting the weightier Matters of the Law.* If we do, we are no more than *Scribes and Pharisees*, egregious Hypocrites in the Sight of God, and very far from that Purity of Heart, that Simplicity and Sincerity recommended to us in the Text. But,

2. We are to consider it with regard *to Man*; and this will also fall into several Particulars. As,

(1.) In the Case of Witness and Deposition. The two grand Rules of Sincerity herein, are Truth and Impartiality. An Evidence or Witness, in what Case soever he is called upon his Oath, must give in nothing but what is *true*; he must vouch nothing *contrary* to his Knowledge, and nothing *more* than he knows; and because the breaking or concealing of Truth may be of the same ill Consequence as downright Falshood, he must be also *full* and *impartial* in his Deposition; not stifling or suppressing any thing which is requisite to the understanding the Case, nor wilfully framing his Words in such an obscure or double Manner, that they may be easily misunderstood. But all he says should be literally true and clear, without any Disguise or Artifice whatever. And this

would retrieve the Honour of our Publick Courts, which are too often horribly abus'd and stain'd with Perjury.

(2.) Another Instance of Sincerity is in the Matter of *Truth* and *Friendship*. To be faithful in every Concern wherein another Man does reasonably depend upon us, is but common Justice; and if we have encourag'd him so to depend upon us, by Pretences of particular Friendship and Affection to him, we are still the more engaged to it. We are to attend his Business with that honest Care and Diligence with which we would attend our own; to do the best we can for *him*, as for *our selves*; deal plainly and sincerely with him upon all Occasions; deceiving him in nothing, betraying him in nothing. The contrary to all this, Disimulation or Treachery or Breach of Trust, are not only not to be reconcil'd with that Purity and Singleness of Heart to which our Christianity binds us, but contrary to the Light and Law of Nature, and deservedly infamous with all Men.

(3.) A third Particular wherein Sincerity is of mighty use, is the Affair of *Contract*, or *Merchandizing*; in which are included all the ways of Sale, and Bargain and Exchange, which we use amongst

amongst Men. In these Simplicity and Honesty are more to govern than the Letter of Laws and Statutes, which cannot provide for all Accidents, or against all Evasions. The Custom of Marts and publick Places of Sale, with other human Regulations of Trade and Commerce, may indulge many things for the sake of Peace which Christianity cannot countenance; and tho' when the Bargain is concluded, the Buyer (how much soever imposed upon) has no Remedy by Law, this Purity of Heart, (the Sincerity or Uprightness we are now speaking of,) obliges the Seller not only to strict Justice and Moderation *before* the Contract, but (if it be concluded upon Ignorance or Mistakes) to the making of due Amends and Satisfaction *after*. For it *seeks not its own* Interest only *but the good of others*.^{1 Cor. 13. 24.} And St. Paul has expressly required of us that *no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter*, and has given a Reason for it which should make us tremble, *because the Lord is the avenger of all such*.^{1 Thes. 4. 6.}

(4.) Sincerity and Simplicity are to run thorough all *our Promises and Engagements* one to another. And here the Rule is Plainness in the Act of promising,

Eph. 5. 23,
to 33.

misgiving, and Honesty in the due Performance of what we promise. The most sacred of all such Contracts is *Marriage*; and much more so to Christians than to all other People in the World: For to *us*, it represents a great Mystery and a great Love, the Love of Christ to his Church, and his Union with it, and therefore calls for the greatest Endearment, and the most faithful Performance, in Imitation of that great Example. The Husband is so to love his Wife, even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it: And the Wife is to be so faithful, so subject to the Husband in all things, as the Church is, or ought to be to Christ. This is the true Meaning and Extent of the Marriage-Vow: And if we do not thus consider it, if we consult the Enjoyment only, or the Fortune, and mind not the Duty and Affection this Engagement carries with it, or if we do consider this without intending or regarding to perform it, we act against that Integrity and Purity of Heart which is the Principle of honest Men, we scandalously break our Faith, and abuse the Person to whom in the solemn Presence of God we plighted it. But beside the Marriage-Vow, and all other Covenants, Contracts

tracts and Promises, of whatever kind, if lawfully made, are to be honestly and carefully observ'd, and if unlawful, ought not to be made. We must deal plainly and fairly, without any Equivocation, Double-meaning, Trick or Artifice, in the making of them, or any Shuffling or Evasion in the Execution. And this is the rather to be insisted on, because it has prevailed by Custom for Men to lay hold on the little Circumstances in Law, which may be thought to give them an Advantage against their Obligation; and think the point of Conscience safe enough, if they fall not within the reach of human Punishment. But this is not what will bear us out with God; for to him we must account for our Simplicity and honest Usage of one another. Let us therefore observe rather what *Christianity requires*, than what the Law of the Land *cannot hinder*; what is honourable and honest, than what is merely safe and indemnifying.

(5.) and *Lastly*, The same Simplicity is to inspire all our *common Conversation*. It's true, every Word in Discourse, every Expression in our Civilities, cannot nicely be weighed before-hand, but Custom in this Case is very much to be con-

considered: For this being the general Rule for the Signification and Force of Words, tho' perhaps some ways of speaking critically, taken to pieces, may be found to carry more in them than he who uses them designs; yet if Custom do interpret them in a looser Sense, there is no harm done, and provided Sincerity and Prudence keep us within that usual Acceptation, Conscience may be satisfied. But that which can never be reconcil'd to this Purity of Intention we are now upon is *Flattery* and *Lying*, Assurances of Kindness, and all the Endearments and Service which can be expressed, without any inward Consent and Affection in the Heart. To advise against our secret Judgment, to commend without a real Approbation, and to conceal our private Hatred and Contempt in the good words of Charity and high Caresses, are absolutely against the Scripture-rule

Eph. 4. 25. laid down to us by St. Paul; *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour. Lye not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds.* Lying is one Branch of the old Man, the degenerate and vicious Principle within us: Now the old Man (or this corrupt Nature, and

Col. 3. 9, 10.

and the several Branches of it) being to be laid aside, and so signified to be done by every Christian in his Baptism, there remains to those who profess this pure and holy Religion no place for Lying, Dissembling, Flattery, or any thing of this kind; but Sincerity and Uprightness even in little and common things is to be the measure of our daily Practice; for this is one great issue of the *new Man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.* And thus we have an Account of the *first Sense of Purity*, as opposed to Mixture and Composition, and implying *Sincerity*.

(II.) The *Second Sense* of it comes next to be considered, as opposed to Defilement or Pollution. And here I must premise some general Notion of the Thing, and tell you what this Purity is; and this may best be done by its Opposite, *Uncleanneſs*, the Character of which I shall give you as the Holy Scriptures deliver it. You may observe, that *Spirit* and *Flesh* are there spoken of as the two great Fountains of Action, or the Principles of Good and Evil respectively in all Mankind. Now that which is derived from the *Flesh* is unclean, corrupt

1 Joh. 2.
16.

rupt and filthy; and the Particulars are summed up by St *John* in these three Heads, *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*: For tho' that Apostle expresses the Principle of all these by another general Term [the World;] yet *the World* there signifies no more than is expressed in other places by *the Flesh*. The Purity therefore introduced by the Christian Institution (that Administration of the *Spirit*, as it is called) being directly opposite to the impure Works of the *Flesh*, we shall treat of it here accordingly, as opposed to the *sensual Appetites* seated in the Body, to *Covetousness*, and to *Pride* or *Ambition*, which are the three grand Instances singled out by St. *John*.

2 Cor. 8.9.

First then, This *Purity of Heart* is expressed in a sober and regular Moderation of *the Appetites of the Body*, which may be reduced to two Heads, as referring either to *Lust*, or to *Intemperance*.

(1.) The Christian Purity expresses its self in restraint of *Lust*, which in an especial manner has obtained the Character of Uncleanneſs and Impurity. And, [1.] It prohibits and prevents the outward Act of Uncleanneſs, and all Connivances, Sollicitations and Attempts in order to it. Fornication, Adultery,
and

and that horrid Crime against Nature, not fit to be named, with all the less Branches of Pollution, or Immodesty, fall under this Class, as directly opposite to Christian Purity, and such as are guilty of them excluded (without a deep and seasonable Repentance) from the Kingdom of Heaven. *For this is the* ^{1 Thes. 4.} *will of God, even your sanctification, that* ^{3, 4, 7.} *ye should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. Walk* ^{Eph. 4. 17.} *not as other gentiles walk—who being* ^{19.} *past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Neither fornicators,* ^{1 Cor. 6.} *nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abu-* ^{9, 10.} *sers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And the Reason why this Purity is expected from us, is very well given by St. Paul.* ^{1 Cor. 5.} *Know ye not that your bodies are the* ^{15, 19, 20.} *members of Christ—the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, and therefore glorifie God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Christ has thought fit to honour the whole Human Nature, (the Body, as*
well

well as that more noble Part the Mind or Soul) by his own appearing in it; and therefore our Bodies also have a very near and honourable Relation to him, and ought not to be debased to Filthiness and Pollution. They are the Temples of God, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them to direct and influence our Minds; and therefore ought not to be employed in any thing unworthy of his Presence, and contrary to his Service. And *Lastly*, They are not our own, to use or to abuse at Pleasure, because our Saviour has actually purchased them to himself by his Death and Sufferings * for their Redemption. [2.] This Christian Purity restrains not only from those gross Acts of Uncleanneſs above-named, but from all *lascivious* and *impure Discourse*. The filthy Tongues of some Men are enough (one would think) to poison the very Air they breath in; 'tis certain they contribute exceedingly to corrupt the Minds of those who hear them, by filling them with lewd Thoughts and Ideas, exciting base Inclinations, and strengthening that Concupiscence which it is a Christian's Business to subdue. In Opposition to this rude and beastly Entertainment, St. *Paul* commands us to
put

* Rom. 8.
24.

put all filthy communication out of our Colof. 3.8.
mouths; and would not have either fil- Eph. 5.4.
thiness, or foolish talking, or jesting, to
be so much as named amongst Christians.
For that such a Conversation is an Ar-
gument of an impure Heart, our Lord
has taught us, when he lays it down for
a Maxim, that *an evil man out of the* Luke 6.45.
evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth
that which is evil; for of the abundance of
the heart his mouth speaketh. And there-
fore [3.] This Purity must be seated also
in the *Heart.* It must restrain the *in-*
ward Appetite and Affection, the Desire,
the Meditation, and the Purpose of Un-
cleanness. We must not please *our*
selves by wallowing in lewd and vicious
Thoughts, any more than we may cor-
rupt *others* by venting them in dissolute
and immodest Talk. For tho' our
Thoughts are secret with respect to
Men, and so not scandalous or offensive
to the World; yet there is no such thing
as Privacy with respect to God: *He is* 1 Chron.
the searcher of all hearts, he understands 28. 9.
our thoughts afar off. He compasses our Psal. 139.
path and our lying down, and is acquaint- 2. 3.
ed with all our ways. We are as much
concerned therefore to keep a Guard
upon our Thoughts, as upon our out-
ward

ward Actions, nay on some Considerations more: For the strongest Garrisons ought to be on the Frontiers of an Enemy; and if ever Sin prevail over us, the Heart is that Pass which must be first attempted and obtain'd. If ever we be drawn to actual Lewdness, the Inclination to it must be first encourag'd there, and there must the Contrivance and

Prov. 4. 23. the Scheme of Vice be laid. *Keep thy heart with all diligence, says Solomon, for out of it are the issues of life.* The Advice is good, and the Reason for it just and true. St. Paul confirms the former, when he advises not only to avoid *fornication and uncleanness*, but in order to that *to mortifie inordinate affection and concupiscence.* And our Saviour gives the Reason for it, when he tells us

Matth. 15. 19. *that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murmurs, adulteries, fornications, &c.* So that whoever would be pure, must first be pure in Heart, carefully resisting and stifling the Beginnings of Lust and Impurity there, and imploring daily the Grace of God to assist him. It's true, there are many who may not be thus pure in Heart, and yet may keep from the gross outward Acts of Uncleanness; for many things may hinder these, which cannot reach the Purpose or Design, or over-

over-rule the Appetite of, and Delight in, such Impurities. The Severity of Laws perhaps, the Reverence of Friends, the Dread of Shame and Disreputation, or it may be the Fear of Mischief and Distempers, may deter them; but it is the business of the Christian Religion, not only to make the *Fruit*, but the *Tree* good also.

(2.) The *Second* thing restrained by Christian Purity, with respect to the Appetites of the Body, is *Intemperance*, or Excess in eating and drinking. St. Paul, in his black Catalogue of the Works of the Flesh, has inserted *Drunk- Gal. 5. 21.*
ennefs and *Revellings*, as well as Adultery and other Acts of Uncleanness, and has alike excluded them who do such things from inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven. And that the avoiding such Excesses is one Instance of that Purity in Heart we are discoursing of, appears from our Saviour's Caution to his Disciples, *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your H E A R T S be over- Luke 21.*
charged with surfeiting and drunkenness. 34.
 The eager Appetite, and thirsty Affection to these Vices, having got Possession of the Heart, are a very great hindrance to a Spiritual Life, and render the Soul stupid and brutish, insensible
 O of

of future Happiness, and averse to God and Goodness. But that which still more evidently makes it proper to consider them here, is this, that they are *immediate incentives to Lust*, they are Fuel to that impure Flame, they pamper the Body to Wantonness, and over-heat the Blood, and by that means fill us with lewd Desires and Fancies, and excite us to all manner of Unclean-ness. The Observation is too obvious to be denied; and therefore whoever would be *pure in Heart*, even in the Sense given of it in the former Article, must purifie himself from this Intemperance, and cleanse his Heart from those luxurious Inclinations which may lead him to it. He must restrain his Appetites to the proper use they were intended for, and not suffer his Body, which is indeed but a *Servant* to the better Part, his Soul, to usurp the Government within him. 'Tis Reason which ought to be the Steward there, *That faithful and wise steward who is to be ruler of the household, to give them their meat in due season*, to measure out those due Supplies and Reparations which are needful for the Body, and restrain all that Excess which would but sensualize the Mind, and indulge irregular Desires. We have now considered Purity
in

in Opposition to the *Lusts of the Flesh*.

Our next Consideration of it must be,

2. *Secondly*, As it restrains *the Lust of the Eye*, the love and desire of *Mony*; and the rather, because St. Paul has taught us, that *this is the root of all evil*. Now this base Affection in the Heart defiles it, by drawing it down and chaining it to Objects which are much below the heavenly Original and noble Capacities of the Soul of Man, and unworthy of those great and glorious Hopes laid up for the believing Christian. Impurity it is to be always groveling in the Dirt, to spend our Days in toiling for a little harden'd Earth, and pleasing our selves as fondly in the Possession of it as Children do with Trifles. The Christian Religion would raise us up to higher Thoughts, and better Expectations, and more refined Enjoyments. *If ye be risen with Christ*, says Col. 3. 1, 2. the Apostle, *set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth*. This therefore is another Instance in which we ought to purifie our Hearts, viz. from the Love of this World, and of the Wealth and Riches of it, which falls under the Name of Covetousness, and may be branched out (so far as we are concerned with it at present) into this

threefold Division. (1.) The coveting any thing which is the Right and Possession of another, and this is expressly forbidden in the Tenth Commandment.

Exod. 20.
17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbours wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbours. The course of Trade and honest Commerce is not at all affected by this Prohibition, so far as our Neighbour has a Power to alienate or transfer his Right; and therefore by this Coveting is meant an envious or eager Desire of what is another Man's Property, either where he cannot part with his Right or where he will not; 'tis a Desire to have what he enjoys, whether he will be willing or not, and to compass it by Fraud or Violence when it cannot be fairly obtained. And to purifie our selves from these irregular Desires, we must inculcate upon our Minds that Contentment which Christianity recommends to us. *Let your conversation, says St. Paul, be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.* (2.) Another Branch of the Vice abovementioned is an over-eager Sollicitude, and anxious Care for Gain and Profit, tho' in

Heb. 13. 5.

in an honest way; much more when it puts Men upon the little Arts of Lying and Deceit to obtain it; and there, I must needs say, it usually ends, however honestly it began; for when Men have set their Hearts upon growing rich and raising an Estate, they lie under a Temptation of abusing an honest Calling by dishonest Practices. Solomon long ago observed it, *He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.* And after him the Apostle, *They that will be rich fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* And therefore he advises that *having food and raiment* (the Necessaries of Life convenient for our Rank and Family) *we should therewith be content.* Nay, tho' we tie our selves down by the Restraints of Conscience to exact Honesty and Fair-dealing, yet an excessive *Thirst* of being Rich is not allowable in a Christian. The Royal Prophet cautions us against it, *Labour not to be rich;* and our Saviour has done the same, *Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for your selves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor*

Prov. 28.
20.1 Tim. 6.
8, 9.

Prov. 23.4.

Matth. 6.
19, 20, 21.

rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. And in another Place has given us fair

Mark. 10. 24. Warning, *how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.* Riches are hard to be obtain'd by our Industry with a Conscience perfectly good, or without more Care and Trouble than they are worth; hard to be kept, for Accidents and ill Men may easily deprive us of them; hard to be enjoy'd without Vanity, and trusting too much in them, or doating too much upon them. And therefore we must purifie our Hearts from this inordinate Appetite, and make the Wish of *Agur's* ours, as it is the wish, of every wise Man; *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord, or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain.* (3.) The third Branch of Covetousness, is, that Sense which common Use has fixed upon the Word, *viz.* a *penurious narrow* Spirit, and such a Fondness of Wealth in the Possession of it, as renders Men averse to use or lay it out where Hospitality, Charity, or even their own Necessities call for it. Against this also our Lord has caution'd

Prov. 30.
8, 9.

us. *Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; and St. Peter requires that we should use hospitality one to another without grudging.* As to Charity, Solomon has laid it down as a Rule, *with-hold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* And as to providing Necessaries for our selves, and those who depend upon us, the common Reason of Mankind is Argument enough for it, and has justly branded the contrary, as absurd, sordid and ridiculous. For what are Riches for, but to be used? *There is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life; and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour; it is the gift of God.* Now this penurious Affection to the Wealth we have, is to be purged out of our Hearts, by restraining the *Estimation* of Riches, that we may not set too great a Value upon them; for they are vain and uncertain things, they will either leave us before, or we must leave them when we die; and therefore we should consider to how little purpose we hoard them up.

The third and last of those Works of the Flesh (reckon'd up by St. John)

Luke 12.
15.

1 Pet. 4. 9.

Prov. 3. 27.

Eccl. 3. 12;
13.

which Christian Purity sets its self against, is the *Pride of Life*, that Affectation of Esteem and Power and Popularity which goes under the Name of *Vanity* and *Ambition*, that over-great Value we are apt to put upon our own Persons, Parts, and Wit; our own Performances, our Learning, Wisdom, Beauty, or any other Faculty or Advantage, and the foolish Ostentation we are apt to make of Pomp and Grandeur in Circumstances which will any way bear it; together with the Consequents of Pride, in all or any of these Instances, Contempt of others, Contention, Animosity, and above all Divisions in the Church, and Seditions in the State: But these will come to be consider'd in another Place. I will only here take notice that St. *Paul* reckons up them, as well as Uncleannefs,

Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. amongst the Works of the Flesh. *The works of the flesh*, says he, *are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.* True Christian Purity therefore is concern'd to purge out all these footy and ill-natur'd Qualities which defile the Mind, and like a secret

cret Poison, swell it to an unnatural Bulk, and tend to as certain (tho' a flower) Ruin. For *the proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord*; God sets himself ^{Prov. 16. 5.} to resist the proud; and when the Almighty contends, he will certainly overcome at last. ^{James 4. 6.}

Having given you thus a full Description of the Persons blessed, *the pure in Heart*, by the several Particulars which such a Purity restrains, and stands in Opposition to; I must conclude the first general Head with this Caution, that we are to take the Character *in its full Extent and Comprehension*, and not in any one Article separate from the rest. *The pure in Heart* therefore, is the sincere and honest man, who has devoted his best Affections and his Worship to the one true God, serves him in the way of Modesty and Obedience, pays him Adoration both with his Mind and Body; is really good and virtuous, as well as seems to be so, and has respect to *all* the Commandments of God; is faithful in all his Depositions; true to his Trust and to his Promises; sincere in his Friendships, and in all his Conversation; and honest in his Dealings; indulges himself in no Impurity of Action, Word or Thought; in no Intemperance or Excess;

cess; in no covetous Desires, no Greediness of Gain, no vile Affection to his Mony; no Pride, Ambition, or Ostentation. He must be *all this*, to constitute him one of those pure in Heart, to whom the Blessing (next to be considered) appertains, for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. And now,

Heb. 12. 14.

II. *Secondly*, We are to enquire into the Nature of that Blessing, *they shall see God*; and this shall be done in as few Words as possible.

(1.) It may be observed in Scripture Language, that Words signifying any corporeal Sense, as tasting, seeing, feeling, and the like, when God is represented as the Object of such Senses, are frequently put for knowing, enjoying, or being affected with some Attribute of his. As in the *Plalmist*, *O taste and see that the Lord is good*; which signifies no more than, Oh perceive and be affected with the Goodness of God. So

1 Pet. 2. 3. St. Peter also uses the Phrase; *if so be, ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, have understood and found by Experience that he is so. And St. Paul in his

Acts 17. 27. Defence at Athens, *that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*, i. e. understand and know

know him. This being apply'd to the present Expression of *seeing God*, it may properly signifie thus much, That the *pure in Heart* shall have rich Communications of the Grace and Blessing of God in this Life, shall enjoy a great Measure of his Favour and Love, and comfortable Sense of it; shall be blessed with a clearer Perception, and an higher Relish than ordinary of the divine Excellencies, and know as much of the divine Nature as can be communicated, known and understood by us in the present State of things: And all this as a Pledge or Seal, a Foretaste of what we shall know and enjoy more perfectly in the World to come; which is the State referred to in my Second Observation.

(2.) That tho' God is a Spirit invisible to human Eyes, as they are now qualify'd, there is a Beatifick Vision of him to be enjoy'd in Heaven; where our Bodies being at the Resurrection spiritualiz'd, (as St. Paul has taught us, *it is* 1 Cor. 15. *sown a natural body, it is raised a spiri-* 44. *tual body*) sublimed into the Dispositions and Qualities of a Spirit, and so the Faculties of it more pure, and more intelligent and capable of perceiving more refined Objects, we *shall see God as he* 1 John 3. 2. *is*, and be for ever happy in the blessed Sight

Sight of him. The Eye shall then see after the manner of a Spirit, being part of a spiritual Body; and if the Angels which are Spirits have an immediate and perceptive Vision of God, why may not the human Nature when it becomes so spiritualized? How indeed to describe that Vision, as yet we know not; for

Matth. 18. 10. St. *John* in the Place above cited tells us, *it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know only in general, that we shall see him as he is.* It will be something proportionable to our then more refined and excellent State; there will be that Emanation or Communication of the divine Presence in the State of Glory, which shall be a real and lasting Satisfaction to the Faculties of a glorified Body. And it is observable that St. *John* applies it to the very Case we are now upon; for having spoke of this Beatifick Vision of God, his next Words are, *And every man that hath this hope in him, [viz. of seeing God in Glory,] doth purifie himself even as he is pure.* The pure in Heart therefore shall see God in the manner above describ'd; and this I take to be the most proper Meaning of the Words in this Beatitude. Those pure and holy, whose Temper and Course of Life in this World has so well

1 John 3.2. 1 John 3.3.

well qualify'd them for a better, shall be received into that most pure and excellent State of Glory, into which *there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, nor any one that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.* They shall there be admitted to that more glorious Sight of God, than it was possible they could be while the Vail of dull Mortality was upon them; *for now we see through a Glass darkly, but then face to face.* Think, Christian, upon the Happiness of this; think how you are pleas'd with the Sight and Conversation of an intimate Friend, especially after a long and tedious Absence, when at best you could only converse with him by Letters; and think how joyfully you behold the Face of a reconciled Enemy; and then consider what it will be for you to be admitted into the Presence and the bright Reflexions of that Countenance which alone can speak Peace and solid Comfort to you. Think of the *Honour and Privilege* of it too, in being called up to serve the King of Glory, the supreme and universal Sovereign of Heaven and Earth, in his own Court and near his Person, where you may for ever Contemplate at the nearest View his

Rev. 21.

27.

1 Cor. 13.

12.

his infinite Majesty, Power, Wisdom and Goodness. Think of the *peculiar Agreeableness* of this Reward to that *Purity* which it is designed to recompence. Thou shalt be received into Heaven, that most pure and perfect State, and see and converse with God, the most pure and perfect Object, that original essential Purity, which thou hast here endeavoured (tho' with great Imperfection) to imitate, and shalt then rejoice in to all Eternity. And having raised thy Affections by such Thoughts, adore and bless the Mercy of thy Saviour, who has entail'd this Blessing upon *the Pure in Heart*, that *they shall see God*.



C H A P. VII.

Of P E A C E.

M A T T. V. 9.

*Blessed are the peace-makers, for they
shall be called the children of God.*



HIS in order is the *Seventh* of the Beatitudes, which we will consider in the same Method we have the former.

I. The Character of the Persons here described, *the Peace-makers.*

II. The Reward assigned unto them, *they shall be called the children of God.*

I. In our Consideration of the Persons here blessed, the *Peace-makers*, it will be necessary to premise something in general, with respect to the Latitude or Signification of the Word, before we reckon up the Particulars wherein this excellent and diffusive Character
exerts

exerts it self. *Ἐιρηνωτικός*, is the Word made use of in the Text; and it may signifie, either (1.) a Reconciler and Composer of Differences as a third Person, a Promoter of Peace and good Agreement amongst others: And this is the Sense to which our *English* Translators have confined it. Or (2.) one of a peaceable and quiet Disposition as to his own Behaviour. For *Ποιεῖν* is used not only for the causing, procuring or effecting of a thing, but for the Inclination of the Mind, and the Bent of Practice, *Ποιῶν ψεῦδος*, *he that maketh a lye*, is he who is enclined or given to lying. So in the First Epistle of St. John, *Whosoever is born of God, ἀμαρτίαν ἔ ποιεῖ*, *does not commit sin*, i. e. does not live in the indulged Habit or Practice of Sin; and again, *Ὁ μὴ ποιεῖν δικαιοσύνην*, *whosoever does not Righteousness*, i. e. sincerely endeavours not in the general course of his Life to practise Holiness and Virtue, *is not of God*. Agreeably whereto, *Ἐιρηνωτικός*, may be one who does, *τὰ τῆς Ἐιρήνης ποιεῖν*, practise the things which make for Peace, and is of a peaceable Temper and Behaviour. And thus including both Significations, the Peace-maker blessed in this Text, is such a true inward

ward Friend and Lover of Peace, that he endeavours to preserve it where it is, and where it is broken to repair it, as well betwixt others where he has only the Quality of a Reconciler, as betwixt himself and another, where he is also a Party.

Now this Temper will express it self,
(1.) *First*, Towards all Mankind in general; he bears an hearty Good-Will to them, desires a good Agreement amongst them, is averse to War and Blood-shed, to national Feuds and private Animosities, and if it were in his Power would establish an entire Serenity and Peace through all the World. And the Reason of this is founded in the very Design of Nature from the first: For whatever some have dreamed to the contrary, the Natural State is not, nor ever was a State of Hostility and War, but of Friendship, Unity and Peace. Men were not formed in great Multitudes out of the Dust or Mud of the Earth, as other Animals were, but descended all from *one Man* (even *Eve* her self being taken from the Side of *Adam*) that they might live as one Body, as Brethren, and Relations in an entire and mutual Affection, remembering their common Original. So afterward, when
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the World was drowned, the human Species was preserved in one Family, (not in so many Persons of several and independant Families) to intimate and recommend to Posterity the same Obligation to Friendship and Agreement. Beside that, we may observe how Nature has furnished some Creatures in their very Make and Form with Instruments of Violence, and others have a sort of natural Armour by which they may secure and defend themselves; but Man is brought naked into the World, with a Body unarmed and undefended, neither apt for Mischief, nor able to resist it; and what can this imply, but the Peace and Gentleness naturally implanted in him, and that there should be no Opposition, no Hostilities at all, betwixt those of this Species, whatever there might be amongst other Animals? It's true, through the *corruption and depravity* of Nature, Wars there are and will be, and private Violence and Animosities too, so long as Pride, Ambition, Covetousness or Revenge possess the Minds of Men; but these things ought not so to be, nor is it at all agreeable to Nature. But perhaps, while we speak so largely against Wars, it may be objected that *God* encouraged the *People* of
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of the *Jews* to War; and not only so, but even to such Severities therein as carry the face of Cruelty and Horror; as in the total Destruction of the *Canaanites*, and *Saul's* Expedition against the *Amalekites*. In answer to which, as to the Wars they had in their Passage to *Canaan*, or in taking Possession of that Land, it is enough to say that God being the Sovereign Lord and Proprietor of the whole Earth, had long before given that Land to *Abraham* and his Posterity, and so the recovering of it was no more than the recovering of their own; and as to their Cruelty in the total Excision of the Inhabitants, the Reason given for the Command of that, is, that the *Israelites* might not, by mixing with them, learn their idolatrous Worship and superstitious Customs. The Wars they had with their Neighbours after, were either by the Authority of God, (who, as we observed before, may dispose of all Countries as he will, and give the Dominion of them to whom he pleases) to enlarge their Borders, or else to vindicate themselves from Oppression; and in this, all Circumstances laid together, there could be no Injustice or Unpeaceableness. That War with the *Amalekites*, and that dreadful

1 Sam. 15.

Exod. 17.
14.
Deut. 25.
17, 18, 19.

Slaughter of them all without distinction of Sex or Age, was also by the express Command of God, (that God to whom Vengeance belongs) to punish them for their base attacking of his People *Israel*, without any previous Injury done, or Provocation given on their side, as they passed through the Wilderness toward *Canaan*; and was no more than God had solemnly threatned from that very time that he would do. It may be objected also against this *universal Benignity* and *Good-will*, above described, that in the Book of *Psalms* there are many Curses and Imprecations uttered against evil Men, which seem to be contrary to such a Temper. But to this I answer, that the Prophets (for such were the Composers of those *Psalms*) being inspir'd by the Holy Ghost, wrote not so much their own Sense as that of the Divine Enditer; those Expressions are rather to be looked upon as Denuntiatiions and Prophecies of what would certainly come to pass, than Curses or Imprecations of the sacred Pen-men. Notwithstanding these Objections therefore, we may still insist upon it, that the Law of Peace and Kindness is inscribed in the very Nature of Men, by God's Authority and Hand, who

who is the Author of Nature; and that Wars (however lawful when they become the only effectual Method left us to do our selves and others Right,) are not desirable, nor to be rashly engag'd in, nor (when reasonable Terms of Peace and Security are proposed) to be obstinately continued and pursued; but we are to be govern'd in all our Conduct, whether as private Men or as Societies and Nations, by a mild and peaceable Disposition one towards another, that we may come up to the Apostle's Rule, *If it be possible, as much* Rom. 12. *as lieth in you, live peaceably with all* 18. *men.*

Secondly, This Disposition will express it self in a particular regard to the *Peace of the Church.* By the Church I here mean, that grand and Catholick Society selected from the rest of the World, and distinguish'd by the Name of *Christians*, the whole Body of such as are baptized into the Name and profess the Religion of *Christ*, and live under the Spiritual Government, Discipline, Ordinances and Privileges of the Gospel: But more especially that Branch of it which is the happy Establishment in our own Country. All these are to be considered as People incorporated into

one Community; and tho' they may be divided amongst themselves by different Opinions, yet they are distinguish'd from the Professors of any other Religion by the general Articles of their Confession, and by these are united and knit together into one Fellowship. Now with respect to the Church, the Man of Peace is to shew his Disposition thereto, both as a *Maker of Peace*, and a *Lover or Practiser of Peace*.

I. *First*, as a *Maker of Peace*, or one who endeavours to the utmost, in his proper Place and Station, to heal the Divisions in the Church of Christ, to reconcile the disagreeing Parties, and reduce them to that Unity and Harmony, that they may indeed appear to make but one Body, and one Profession. This is a Work of great Honour and Goodness; but withal it requires an excellent Wisdom, and many Heads and Hands and Hearts combining to effect it. If *Sovereign Princes*, endow'd with a Zeal and Virtue as eminent as their Power, would consult together in earnest upon this glorious Enterprize, or labour in it at least as far as they can within their own Dominions; If *General Councils* were convened with such a Temper; If *Ecclesiastical Governors* would

would enter into the same Design, and be industrious to promote it; what an happy Union, what a peaceful Serenity in the Affairs of Religion might we not hope for throughout the Christian World? But without the Concurrence of all these, I doubt 'tis hardly practicable; nor will it be proper for me to prescribe, supposing such Endeavours, how or by what Measures so great a Point may be effectually gained; or what Compliances are necessary on all Hands, to fix a regular and lasting Union; this must be left to those who have Authority to concert the Matter. Yet something there is, which even a private Christian may contribute towards this great and good Work. Where Piety and Learning have the Happiness to meet in him, a clear and cool Head, with a peaceable and religious Heart, they qualifie him for promoting a Spirit of Peace in the Church, by his publick Writings. Perhaps he may be able in so affecting a Manner to represent the Mischiefs of Separation and Division, the Beauty and Advantages, the Reasonableness and Necessity of Union, to propose such a Temper or Medium betwixt the two angry Extreams, to propose it in such a mild and engaging way,

and to establish it with such a Strength of Argument, as, by the Blessing of God, may be of great Use to shew all Sides the Error of their Dissentions, and prepare their Minds for such a Concord and Agreement, as the Authority of their Governors may think fit to impose upon them when that shall come to be concerted. He may also in the Course of his Conversation in the World, in the Education of his Children, or upon any other Opportunity which offers, make it his pious Care to promote such Principles as tend to Peace, and to bear down the Credit of uncharitable and factious Heats, by shewing the Folly and the Wickedness of them. But this is not all, there is somewhat more which every Christian may, and ought to do, in this Affair. He ought to apply himself by *fervent* and *frequent Prayer* to Almighty God, the God of Peace and Love, that as he thought it not too much to establish Peace betwixt Heaven and Earth, at the Expence of the Sufferings of his only Son our Saviour, he would also, by the mild and gracious Influences of his holy Spirit, establish it on Earth, amongst all the Branches of that Family which he has thus redeemed and purchased to himself; *enlightning those who are in Error,*

ror, or inspiring the whole Body of Christians with that *Good-will* and *Charitable Affection at least* which may unite their *Hearts*, if not their *Notions* and *Opinions*. Thus Christ, a little before he suffered, put up a most pathetic Prayer to God for this great Blessing of *Unity* amongst all who should believe in him. But,

John 17.
20, 21, &c.

2. *Secondly*, We are to consider the Christian as a Lover of Peace, one who *practises* as well as *prays* for it, and promotes it in the Church by his own peaceable Temper and Conduct. Now this appears in him in several Particulars.

(1.) He is not apt to *embrace* or *take up* an Opinion contrary to what the Church has universally receiv'd. He does not affect a Sett of new and singular Notions in matter of Faith, or Peculiarities in Discipline or Worship, which the primitive Ages of the Church either knew nothing of, or never own'd, or generally wrote against, and which the modern Ages also have alike not thought of, or else condemned. For he is willing to look upon the Church collective, made up and govern'd by many wise and learned and pious Men, as better able to interpret difficult Places of holy Scripture than himself,
or

or than any of the forward Leaders of Separation. He does not make himself a *Slave* to the Decisions of any Man, or any Body of Men, to believe and act along with them at all Adventures; for where they apparently forsake the Scriptures, he forsakes *them*; but he is always very tender when it comes to the Point of rejecting probable and receiv'd Opinions or Practices, in defence of which a great deal may be said. Here-
 remembers the Exhortation of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians*, to *stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind*, — to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing. If there be therefore, says that Apostle, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, &c. be ye like minded. And so to the
 I Cor. 1. 10. *Corinthians* also; I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. However,

(2.) Forasmuch as a Man cannot believe just what he will, but what his own Understanding and Judgment are convinced of, the peaceable Christian, if in any Point he is not satisfy'd with the
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Resolution and Decisions of the Church, the Doctrine, Worship, or Discipline thereof, will modestly keep his Opinion to himself, and not set up for gaining Profelites, or being the Head of a Party. He will not make it his Busiuefs to rail at and expose whatever agrees not with his own Sentiments, and to raise a Faction against every thing he does not like; but chuses rather to be silent and reserved upon such Heads, as waiting 'till the Church her self discover the Mistake, or he be convinced by better Information. And tho' he cannot think as others do, he will keep up Charity and a kind Affection towards them; as *St. Paul* directs, when having required the *Philippians* to be *like minded*, lest that could not always be observed, he adds, *having the same love, being of one accord*. For Men who differ in some Points of Judgment amongst themselves, may still bear the same Love to one another which they have who do agree, they may live in the same Accord and Friendship, as if they were of the same Mind. And this is a Duty to take Place where Notions and Opinions differ. Again,

(2.) Tho' he disapprove of *many things* in the Doctrine, Order or Worship of the Church establish'd in his Country, he

he will not be forward *to engage in an open Separation from it.* He will be ready to hear and read with Impartiality whatever may be argu'd for it, will try all Ways to convince himself in favour of it, and at least will go as far as he can along with such an Establishment; because he is really tender of breaking the Peace of the Church, and weakning it by such Divisions. He will do nothing through Pride or Obstinacy, or little and unworthy Interests; but in the Sincerity and Uprightness of his Heart, consult the Honour and Safety and Edification of the Church, above his own or any other Body's Opinion. It is not every thing which will justify a Separation; it must be something plainly sinful, highly dangerous and intollerable; for Unity and Peace are of more Consequence, than to be sacrificed to small Pretences. Indeed it may happen that a Church may be corrupted so far in its Doctrine and Worship, as to render it sinful to communicate therein, and necessary for the Guides and Leaders to reform it in several Instances. Yet in this Case there is to be that Regard of Peace, that such a Reformation is not to be violent or passionate; but *for the matter of it, agreeing with the Word of God,*
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and with the first and purest Ages of Christianity; and for *the manner*, with a Readiness to submit to any proper way of Determination which has been used in such a Case, and a great Desire of the Concurrence of the remaining Part from which the Separation is made. And if this had not been the Case of the Reform'd Churches, when they withdrew from *Rome*, they could hardly have been vindicated from the Charge of Schism, as by their Temper and Moderation in that Point they certainly may. Once more,

(4.) The peaceable Christian, conforming entirely in his Sentiments and Practice to the establish'd Church, is not *bitter* and *furious* against others who dissent from it. He lays aside *all anger, and wrath, and tumult, and evil speaking*, endeavours all he can to convince them of their Error; but he does it in the *Spirit of Meekness*, being sensible that the contrary will rather harden and exasperate, than reduce them. So St. Paul directs *Timothy*, that he should *be gentle* 2 Tim. 2. *unto all, apt to teach, patient, in meek-* 24, 25. *ness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

Having

Having thus gone through the peaceable Man's Behaviour with respect to the *Church*, we must next take a View of him,

Thirdly, As a Member of the *Civil State*, the Kingdom or Commonwealth he lives in. And here I might repeat almost all that has been said concerning the Peace of the Church, for there is a fair Analogy betwixt these two Heads, but I shall as briefly as I can consider that of the Civil Government distinctly. The peaceable Disposition of a good Man shews it self in this Case,

(1.) By a quiet Obedience to the Laws; expressing no Contempt, no Disregard of Government, contriving no subtil and treacherous Evasions to defeat the true Design of a Law; but in the Fear of God, for Conscience sake performing what the Wisdom and Authority of the Nation have thought fit to require in order to the Peace and Safety of the Whole.

(2.) In submitting to the Penalties and Inflictions, the Impositions and Burdens which are laid upon him, without Tumult or Discontent, seditious Murmuring at, or speaking evil of the Government thereupon; remembering our Saviour's

viour's Example, who to avoid Offence^{Matth. 17.} paid Taxes, and owning the Power of^{24.} the *Roman* Governor to be from God,^{John 19. 11, &c.} submitted to his Sentence; as also the Doctrine of *St. Peter*, that we should^{1 Pet. 2. 13, 14.} submit to every Ordinance of the Magistrate, whether supreme or subordinate; and that of *St. Paul*, that we should *render tribute to whom tribute is due,*^{Rom. 13. 7.} *custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour.*

(3.) In putting the most favourable Construction upon the Proceedings and Transactions of the Government; not speaking evil of Dignities, or factiously censuring and railing at either the Prince, or those in the Administration under him. For that Law in the Book of *Exodus*. *Thou shalt not revile the*^{Exod. 22. 28.} *judges,* (so the Margent of our Bible^{28.} reads it) *nor curse the ruler of thy people,* is certainly of a Moral Nature, and still in force, and as such the Apostle * cites^{* Acts 23. 5.} it; all Governments being alike disturbed and injured by such unpeaceable and seditious Practices.

(4.) In avoiding as much as possible the engaging himself in *any Party*, be the Name or the Pretences of it what they will. This fatal Distinction by State Parties (cherished by such as find their

their own private Interest, and make their way to Advancement by imposing upon well-meaning People) is of the last ill Consequence both to Truth and Peace. To *Truth*, as when Men are once thoroughly engaged on such or such a Side, and have listed themselves under a Name (according as the Distinction goes) being deluded into it by the Intrigues and plausible Stories and Suggestions of such as have a Turn to be served, and want a Sett of Tools to serve it, their Minds are effectually prejudiced, and their Ears are stopped to all Representations, however true and just they may be, of the ill Designs or Errors of those of that Party which they have embraced, and to all the generous and good Designs of the other which they have taken against. All the Virtues of their own Side are magnified, all their Suggestions, true or false, have Credit with them, and all their Faults are disbelieved; and by a like Prepossession the adverse Party is run down, discredited, and condemned at all Adventures: In-somuch that *Partiality*, which is the proper Word to express the Temper we have here described, has taken its very Name from *Party*, and thereby sufficiently justifies our Application, which
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daily Experience also shews to be true in Fact. And that all this must be a mighty Prejudice to *Peace* as well as Truth, will not need many words to prove. For do we not every Day behold the Effects of it in the restless Contrivances of either Party to put down the other and advance it self, and that not without frequent Convulsions in the State, and apparent Hazard to the publick Welfare, the most bitter Animosities amongst private Persons, Alienation of Love and Friendship amongst Relations and old Acquaintance, Reproaches, malicious Offices, scurrilous Libels, Riots, and in short a wretched train of Mischiefs, which disgrace Religion, disturb the Peace of the Kingdom, and tend to overthrow the Government. The peaceable Man therefore wisely sees this and avoids it. He is either of no Party at all, or if this be next to impossible, and he sees Reason to think better of one Party than of another, and to conduct himself accordingly, he will never go along with it in Heat and Passion, he will impartially consider every thing, suspend his Belief of many things alledged on either Side, and act only so far with any as in his cool and real Judgment he thinks is

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most for the Service and Safety of his Country; for let him have what Inclination he will toward one Party more than the other, he makes not their little Interests or Example *his Rule*, but follows them no farther than they pursue the publick Good, and carries kindly and obligingly, peaceably and charitably, to all without Distinction.

(5.) This peaceable Disposition with respect to the State, will express it self in frequent and hearty Prayers for the Peace and Welfare of the Publick. St. *Paul* expressly calls us to it, when he exhorts, *That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* The Israelites were all called upon by *David*, *To pray for the peace of Jerusalem*; and even in the Captivity of the Jews at *Babylon*, *Jeremiah* requires them even to *seek the peace of that city*, where they were detained as Captives, and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof, says he, *ye shall have peace.* We have now done with the Character of the Peace-maker as a Member of Civil Government or publick

publick Societies. We must look upon him,

Fourthly, As he is in a *particular Neighbourhood* or *private Relation*. And here he is to be considered,

I. As a Maker of Peace, a third Person endeavouring to reconcile the Differences of others, and to draw them as near in Kindness and Friendship as they are in their Dwellings and Condition. And this he does,

(1.) By *Perswasion*, by using the Interest he has in the Persons who are at Difference (or in others who may with better advantage make the same Representations to them) to settle a right Understanding one of another; for many Quarrels arise from meer Mistakes, without any just and real Offence offered on either hand, but only supposed and fancied, 'till Pride and Jealousie feeding upon that Supposition, exceedingly magnifie the Thing and inflame the Resentment. In this Case, the Peace-maker lays open the true State of the Matter, and stripping it of the Disguise which Self-Love, Prejudice and Passion have involved it in, he shews them both their Error, that there was really nothing of Substance in the presumed Offence, and that therefore it ought not to be insisted

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ed upon. But then, because *every* Difference does not arise from Mistake, but sometimes *just Occasions of Offence* are given; in this Case he endeavours to make the offending Party sensible of what he has done, to convince him of the Affront or Injury, and of the Evil of it, of the Breach of Duty he has been guilty of, not only toward his Neighbour, but to God also, and makes him ready to humble himself, to acknowledge his Fault, and to desire Reconciliation and Amity; while on the other hand he prepares the Party offended to receive him upon these Terms into his Charity and Friendship, by telling him the Duties of Forgiveness, the Resemblance which such a generous Temper bears to the Mercy of God, and the Necessity of it in order to obtain for himself that Mercy.

(2.) Because Perswasion will not always do, the Peace-maker is ready to take the Trouble of *Arbitration*, to compromise the Matter by giving his own positive Judgment and Opinion, where both Parties are willing to rest satisfied with it, and refer themselves to him. In many Differences (tho' perhaps of little Value and Concern) there may be some pretence of Reason on both Hands.

Now

Now if the Plaintiff and Defendant could be prevailed with by some charitable Neighbours to put Matter to *Arbitration*, to chuse out by Agreement one or more Persons, of whose Understanding and Equity they have a good Opinion, who should fully hear the Case betwixt them and decide it privately by an Award, to which both Parties should oblige themselves to stand; it would be a very great Office of Peace and good Nature both in those who take the pains to *perswade them* to so wise a Method, and in those also who accept the Trust of such a Reference, and take upon them to determine the Quarrel. This would be a Means to stop a thousand of those trifling and contentious Suits which are daily prosecuted, to the great Dishonour of our Courts of Justice, and the great and needless Expence of those who sue and who are sued. Beside, that a *publick Determination* in Course of *Law*, however it may decide the Action, leaves the contending Parties still unclosed, and at a distance in the Point which is of most Importance, their Charity and inward Sentiments, which is a thing may better be effected by *the private Peace-maker*. For Experience shews that when Men

once begin to contend and sue openly their Malice grows with their Expence, and whatever becomes of their Cause, they are resolved never to be Friends again: But when a Difference has been amicably taken up by the Interposition of Friends, who with Wisdom and Gentleness moderate in the Affair, they shall presently love one another as well, if not better than before. But the Peace-maker in this Case is to govern himself by these Measures. He is not to be *over-busie*, to thrust himself too far into things wherein (without due Invitation) he is not concern'd. He is not to affect the Office in a way of *Pride* and *Ostentation*, but modestly and humbly to offer himself, or to accept it being offered, as a part of Christian Duty, which in the Sight and Fear of God he is to execute. And *Lastly*, he *must not be partial*, but consider the Merits of the Cause on both Sides with all possible Candour and Integrity. I pass now on to the *Second* Consideration of him,

2. As one of a *peaceable Disposition* and *Behaviour* towards all who are about him. 'Tis a melancholy thing to look into some Families, and see them perpetually embroil'd in Quarrels and
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Divisions within themselves, to look in-
to some Neighbourhoods, Towns or
Parishes, and observe one Family or Per-
son maintaining Hatred and Disgust a-
gainst another, and this so frequent as
it is in many Instances; to see People
resorting to the same holy Assemblies,
joining in the same publick Prayers,
the same Christian Offices of Charity, re-
ceiving together the most solemn Bond
of Unity and Love, the Sacrament of
the Lord's Supper, and yet carrying
with them thither in their Hearts a Spi-
rit of Strife and Bitterness, Anger, Vi-
olence, and Contention. All this must
needs be contrary to the Temper of this
Disciple in the Text, the peaceable and
quiet Christian, and to that blessed Le-
gacy of Peace which Christ our Saviour ^{John 14.}
bequeathed to all his Followers. Let us ^{27.}
see then how the peaceable Man be-
haves himself in the Neighbourhood and
Relations wherein God has plac'd him.

First, then, He is very careful
to give *no just Offence or Provocation* to
any, which being taken hold of and
resented, may become a ground of Dif-
ference. The Provocations I am con-
cerned to speak of here, are either in
Word, or Action. The first is the Issue
of *the Tongue*, that World of Mischief ^{James. 3}
and Iniquity, with which Men blast and ^{5. 6.}

stain one another; and when they have done blessing God with it, presently fall to cursing or reviling their Neighbour. Now those who would come up to the Character described in the Text, make it their Study to bridle this unruly Member: The peaceable Man will not revile or slander any one; he will not bring an evil Report upon others, either openly or secretly; nor spread and tell again the malicious Stories which are told him; but always enclines to speak and hope of his Neighbours rather better than perhaps they generally deserve; he does not suffer his Tongue to get an Habit of ill Language; but bespeaking every Body fairly and civilly, does what he can to secure their living peaceably and kindly with him. As to his *Actions*, he is alike studious to do no Injury, and give no Provocation by them. He makes no voluntary Trespas upon the Possession of his Neighbour, he refuses not any neighbourly Courtesie or good Office he can do him, and is very unwilling to be in any way the Occasion of any Loss or Damage to him; in short, he does all he can to oblige, and nothing wilfully to disoblige him. But,

Secondly, Suppose he really chance to offend, or to provoke him by some foul Word, imprudent Conversation or
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ill Usage; he is willing and ready to tender his Submission, to acknowledge his Fault, to offer Recompence according as the Case requires, to desire Reconciliation, to make the first Step towards it, and to use all decent Means of recovering Amity, tho' it may be somewhat to his own Loss. It is but reasonable that he who by evil Language miscalls, or by unworthy Slanders vilifies and degrades his Neighbour, should at least give himself the Lie, and acknowledge it was neither true, nor fit to be spoken; for the Reputations of Men are like fair Blossoms, pleasant, and hopeful of much future Advantage from them, while they stand; but soon blown off by any violent and ill-natur'd Wind, and a Man may suffer great Losses by the reproachful Word or slanderous Story of a Neighbour. Now he that shall do thus, if he would return to the Honour of the Christian Religion, and do an Act worthy of the Goodness of his Profession, must earnestly repent of this Evil, and acknowledge it with a real Concern, not only to God, but also to the injur'd or offended Party, and tender whatever just Satisfaction shall be thought fit to be made him, and this in order to restore the Peace of the Neighbourhood, as well as repair the Sufferings of the Man. And
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the Reason holds the same for evil Actions. If by these we do Wrong to him or prejudice his Affairs, or if by refusing some neighbourly Office we provoke, or by a morose and uncivil Carriage do affront him; rather than suffer the Matter to grow to Enmity and Dissention, we should make Restitution, and repair the Injury, rather *above* the Value of the Offence or Damage, than any thing *short of it*; be willing to ask Pardon, and to make Amends to him by more abundant Civilities for the future.

Thirdly, The peaceable Man is not *apt to be offended*, he is not blown into a Flame with every Blast. As he is careful not to offend others, and to submit to others where he has offended; he considers also that he is not to take Notice of every Trifle and every Passion, every bitter Word, and every Story; he passes them over with a general Neglect and Silence, leaving the Offender to cool himself into a better Mind, or rather waiting the Grace of God for his Conversion. For since all People cannot be perswaded to restrain their Tongues, and to govern their Actions as they ought to do, Resentment would be endless, and living in the World intollerable, if all Occasions of Offence were to be taken,

ken, which the Pride, or Malice, or Impertinence of Men may give. Con-
niving at such Injuries, as it will be a
greater Ease and Satisfaction to a Man's
self, retaining a peaceful Calmness in
his own Breast, and giving his Thoughts
no Trouble (or as little as may be) for
what he has not deserved, and could not
hinder, so it will always be found a like-
lier way to reconcile an Enemy, than
the pursuing him with Law or Violence,
and Retaliation. And I will add, that
nothing more effectually disappoints and
mortifies the malicious Offender, than
to perceive that his Provocations pass
for nothing, his petty Injuries give no
Disturbance, and his Affronts are all too
inconsiderable to be taken notice of.
But I would not be misunderstood, as if
going to Law, to do our selves Right in
Case of Injuries of great Concern to our
Estate or Reputation, was contrary to
Christian Peace; for a peaceable and
charitable Temper may be secured even
in *that*, by a Readiness all along to agree
the Matter upon reasonable Terms, in-
sisting upon no more than reasonable Da-
mages, aiming only to recover our just
Rights, and not to gratifie Revenge or
Anger; behaving our selves to our Ad-
versaries, during the Suit, in a friend-
ly and peaceable manner, and contri-
ving

ving to put him to as little Charge in the Proceſs as can be. A Suit at Law thus managed, as it may be a neceſſary Piece of Juſtice, will be no Breach of Peace and Charity. To proceed,

Fourthly and laſtly, He who would come up to the higheſt Pitch of Religion in this Matter, muſt not only be backward to reſent, but even ready to *ſubmit*, (I can find no better Word for it) when he is injured. To ſee a Man loaded with falſe Reports and publick Reproaches by a wicked and malicious Tongue, to ſee him injur'd in his Eſtate and Livelihood, and at the ſame time pitying the Offender's Malice, and intreating him to Terms of Peace and Kindneſs, is to ſee a fair Copy of that Pattern ſet us by our Saviour, a moſt rare and excellent Inſtance of a Chriſtian Spirit. But here great Care is to be taken that Diſcretion moderate and govern this exalted Pitch of Goodneſs, leſt it be over-ſtrained to an Exceſs of Weakneſs and Folly. The injured Man who would be reconciled, who deſires it and ſollicits for it, muſt do this in ſuch a decent and wiſe Manner as may ſecure the Honour of the Chriſtian Religion, and plainly ſhew that what he does proceeds from pure Goodneſs and the Love of
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of Peace, and not from Fear and Cowardice, and such a Meanness of Spirit as is indeed contemptible.

Having thus discharged myself of the Description of the Persons blessed, the *Peace-makers*, I come now to consider in a few Words that particular *Blessing* or *Reward* assign'd them in my Text, *they shall be called the children of God*. Such as know them and live about them in this World, and taste the beneficial Influences of such a Temper, and enjoy the Advantages of it, or observe with a just Admiration the Beauty and Usefulness thereof, shall bless those excellent Souls who have and practise it, and acknowledge *that God is in them of a truth*. But this is a very small part of what those Words include, *They shall be called the children of God*, i. e. they are and shall be owned (not only by Men, but) *by God himself* as his Sons, and shall be receiv'd and lov'd accordingly. And all this,

(1.) Because by this pacific and peaceable Spirit, they in a peculiar manner *resemble God their heavenly father*, who ^{1 Cor. 14.} is *the God of peace*. The Character of ^{33.} Divine Goodness, which appears so vi- ^{2 Cor. 13.} sibly in the Air and Features of their ^{11.} Mind (if I may so speak) sufficiently declares whose Children they are; and as Parents are apt to have most Affection

on for those of their Children who are most like them, or take most after them, so God will more especially own and cherish such as bear his Image in this great and fair Impression of it. And,

(2.) They shall be called his Children, as they employ themselves in that which was the grand Affair and Business of his Son Christ Jesus, who came down from Heaven to do the same good Office betwixt God and Man, which the Peace-maker endeavours betwixt one Man and another. For Christ is the great Reconciler, who *both made peace through the blood of his cross*; and those who imitate him in Labours of the same generous kind, may properly enough be stiled his Brethren, and shall be owned as such by him, and by his Heavenly Father.

Col. 1. 20.

We have considered thus briefly *why* they are called *the Children of God*; it concerns us next in a word or two to enquire the *Consequence* of this, or what *Benefit* they have by being owned as the Children of God, and in this lies the Substance of the Blessing. St. Paul has done it to our Hands in that one Text to the *Romans*, *If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ—that we may be glorified together.*

Rom. 8.
17.

ther. They shall be Partakers of the Heavenly Inheritance, be received into everlasting Life, and reign with Christ in Glory. And he who thinks there can be a more desirable Blessing than this, is at once insensible and unworthy of any thing which may be called a Blessing; 'tis the utmost of a Christian's Hopes, and a more than sufficient Reward for all his Labours. Yet this is still to be understood, as in the two preceding Beatitudes, supposing a Principle of Love to God, and Obedience to him, as the Ground of all our Endeavours for making or observing Peace, and including the rest of our Christian Duty required of us in the Gospel, as the Terms of our Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.



CHAP.



C H A P. VIII.

Of PERSECUTION for Righteousness sake.

M A T T. V. 10, 11, 12.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.



OUR Blessed Saviour tells his Followers, that their Adherence to him in the Faith and Practice of the Gospel would certainly raise them abundance of Enemies; that the Prince of Darkness, who
Joh. 12. 13. is also stiled *the Prince of this World*, from his numerous and prevailing Party

ty in it, *the spirit that still works in* Eph. 2. 2. *the children of disobedience*, would muster all his Forces against them, and harass them at least (if he can do no more) by daily Detachments of the Violence or Malice of wicked Men in some degree or other, to insult and ruffle them in the Profession of Truth and Holiness, so that *through much tribulation it* Acts 14. *is that we must enter into the kingdom* 22. *of God.* Now Christ thought fit to encourage with a *particular Blessing* those who were to be exposed to so many *particular Hardships*, and not only to entail a Reward upon their Virtue, but upon their *suffering for it* too. And this he does in a much larger compass of Expression than any of the foregoing Beatitudes took up; he is copious in describing the Persecution, emphatical in pronouncing the Reward, repeats the Blessing twice, and throws in an Exhortation and an additional Comfort to the Sufferer, and all this because he knew 'twas easier by much to *do well* than to *suffer well*: For notwithstanding all the Corruption of our Nature, the most elaborate and exalted *Virtue* is not so much against the Grain with us, so difficult or uneasy, as it is to *suffer Persecution*. Our Saviour therefore was pleas'd to apply himself with *more*
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than ordinary Pains (as we find in many other Discourses of his as well as this) to fortifie his Disciples against the terrible shock which he foresaw the Rage of Hell and Human Wickedness would give them. In the Verses now before us we have,

I. The Persons blessed, those which are persecuted for Righteousness sake.

II. The Blessedness or Reward of such Persons.

III. Their Duty, or an Exhortation to them to rejoice and be exceeding glad.

To begin with the *First*,

I. The Persons blessed, such as are *persecuted for Righteousness sake*. And here it concerns us to enquire, what is meant by Righteousness, and consider what that Persecution is, which may be expected on the account of Righteousness.

First, What is here meant by Righteousness; a Point which had need be well understood, and carefully distinguished; for if this be not the Cause for which we suffer, or if we mistake that
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for Righteousness which is not really so, the Title to the Reward is lost.

By Righteousness therefore is meant, (1) The Profession of the Christian Faith, or the Adherence to some eminent Fundamental Article thereof. The most material Articles of this are comprised in what we commonly call the *Apostles Creed*; but more at large in the Scriptures of the *Old and New Testament*. The Apostle tells us, that *all* ^{2 Tim. 3.} *scripture is given by inspiration of God,* ^{16.} *and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,* i. e. in one word 'tis a compleat and perfect Rule of Faith and Manners. Whatsoever therefore is *expresly taught us* in the Holy Scriptures as an Article of Faith we are to believe; these being that *form of sound Words* delivered to ^{2 Tim. 1.} ^{13.} us, which we must *hold fast, and earnestly contend for*: Whatever is *contrary* to the Holy Scriptures, let the Authority be what it will that shall attempt to force it upon us for a Truth, is to be resolutely and boldly rejected: And whatsoever is *not expresly there laid down* as Matter of Faith and Doctrine in Religion, or by necessary Consequence clearly to be inferred from that which

is, we are not only under *no Obligation to receive*, but when it shall be imposed as a Truth Essential to the Faith and Communion of Christians, we are under an Obligation to protest against it. And if we be called to suffer upon any of these Accounts, either for maintaining the one, or rejecting, or opposing the other, it may with Assurance be concluded that we suffer for Righteousness sake. St. Paul declares to the *Galatians*, that if he, or any other Man, or even an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel to them than that which they had received he should be accursed. Let those consider this who make the commandment of God of no effect by their traditions, and will needs be altering, adding to, or amending the Gospel which our Saviour left us. And since we cannot acknowledge that as an Article of Faith, which the Author of our Faith Christ Jesus and his Holy Apostles have not declared to be so, without owning another Law-giver and Author of our Faith besides him, and another Gospel; to suffer Persecution for refusing to do this, is properly and literally *to suffer for Christ*. But since there have been many Differences about the Interpretation of several Texts of Scripture containing Matters of

of Faith and Doctrine, and the Church has all along been divided into Parties upon some or other of these, maintaining diverse and contrary Expositions, and either Side appears so zealous in their own Sense of them, as to be ready to expose their Lives and all their Advantages for the maintaining of it; and since it has often happen'd, that not only in different Places and Countries, where different Opinions are countenanced, but in the same State or Body, according to the Sway of Government on one Side or the other, Men have suffered the Loss of their Estates, their Liberty, and their Lives, for maintaining a contrary Sense of the same thing: It concerns us to be very careful in judging of the Cause of such Suffering, and to be very sure of the Ground we go upon, before we pronounce it to be *for righteousness sake*. For as it is impossible that any Article should be true in two contradictory Senses, it must be supposed that some of these Sufferers, tho' they have suffered for maintaining an Article of Religion, (or what they took to be so) have yet not suffered for Righteousness sake, because they have maintain'd another Sense or Judgment of it than that which is indeed the true one. Righteousness therefore

(consider'd as a Cause of Martyrdom or Suffering) seems not to lye in these *obscure* and *doubtful* Cases. The only safe Ground of being confident that we suffer for Christ, and for Righteousness sake, is when we suffer for what is *clearly* and *plainly* revealed to us in the Gospel. In fine, it is not *every* Cause, no nor *every Cause which has an immediate Reference to Religion*, which will make a Christian Martyr or Sufferer within the Intention of this Text. For Ignorance or Error may produce an *Obstinacy in suffering*, and it deserves no better Name when we suffer for a *doubtful* or an *indifferent* Opinion, which is either *not clear* from Scripture, or *not material* if it were so. The Christian Confessor or Martyr must be one who suffers either for the Profession of Christianity it self, or some Truth which is an *express* and *evident* Branch of it as such, and *of great Importance* to our Faith or Manners, or else for the rejecting of some *additional Doctrine* impos'd upon him directly contrary to, or not apparently contained in the holy Scriptures, which are to us the only Rule of Faith, or not to be deduced by clear and natural Consequences from them. But Righteousness is not confin'd
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to Matter of *Faith*, it extends to Matters of *Practice* also. And therefore,

(2.) By Righteousness is meant the *Worship of God* in the way of his own Appointment, the Practice of a *religious and holy Life* in general, or the Discharge of *some particular Duty* laid down in holy Scripture, or rationally inferred from thence; as also the *refusing to do* any thing which is plainly forbidden in the Word of God. Thus *Daniel* was ^{Dan. 6.} cast into the Lion's Den for praying to the true God; and *Shadrach, Meshech* ^{Dan. 3.} and *Abednego* into the fiery Furnace, for refusing to worship the Idol which the King of *Babylon* had set up. Thus *Cain* slew his Brother *Abel*, *because his own* ^{1 John 3. 12.} *works were evil and his brother's righteous*; and thus *St. Paul* declares that *all* ^{2 Tim. 3. 12.} *that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*. This Assertion of the Apostle's is the more remarkable, as it is certain he could not mean by it all those who to the end of the World should *make Profession of the Christian Faith*; because in such a Sense it is not true; for since Christianity has been received and established by the Civil Authority, and Kings are become the nursing Fathers, and Queens the nursing Mothers of the Church, many Millions of Christians (I mean of such as have been bap-

tized and made an outward Profession of Christianity) have lived, and daily do live quietly, without Danger of Persecution upon that Account. But in a narrower Sense, which the very Letter of the Text expressly favours, it is and always will be true. All those who are *real* and *inward* Christians (as well as outwardly so by Name and Profession,) all who will *live godly* in Christ Jesus, who will be strictly good and religious, and endeavour to acquit themselves in *every* Article of their Duty, even the most unpopular and unfashionable, must expect to suffer Persecution of one sort or other, from a prophane and wicked World. This pious *David* experienc'd long ago. *They are my adversaries,* says he, *because I follow the thing that is good.* And many such there are in our Times, (as the Apostle foretold there would be in the latter Ages of the Church) who notwithstanding that they own *the form*, deny and even ridicule *the power of godliness*, and hate all serious Religion. It is not indeed in their Power to torture or put to death good Men for their Piety and Virtue, but they persecute them as far as they can; and how far that is we shall see under the next Inquiry. At present it will be enough to say, that whosoever suffers purely for the

Practice

Practice of Religion, the Discharge of any *Christian Duty*, or *refusing to commit any Sin*, as undoubtedly suffers for Righteousness sake, as if it had been for the *Profession of the Christian Faith*. But here again we must apply the Caution given under the former Head, that what we take for a *Duty* or a *Sin*, be capable of a clear and rational Proof from holy Scripture that it is so; or else our Suffering for the Discharge of the one, or refusing to do the other, must not be placed to the Account of Righteousness. And that our Conduct and Behaviour in it too be as prudent as possible, and without any just Occasion of Offence: For if it be otherwise, we do not suffer merely for Righteousness sake, but draw it upon our selves, by our own Pride, or Moroseness, or Impertinence; our needless and affected Austerities; or some other Error in the Management of Conscience. Nor must we charge our Sufferings to the Score of Religion, if there be any other prevailing Mixture in the Cause of them; if we have unjustly *provoked* or *injured* those who set themselves against us; or if we have done any thing which is justly *odious* or *reproachful*. For as religious Men have still their Passions and Infirmities about them in too great a Measure,

sure, 'tis possible the Quarrel may be grounded upon somewhat less defensible and generous than their Piety; tho' perhaps their Character for this may add some Sting to the Malignity. But I must hasten to enquire,

Secondly, What the Persecution is which may be expected for Righteousness sake. Three Sorts of Persecution the eleventh Verse in my Text suggests to us. *First*, That which is most usually so called, and therefore is describ'd no farther than by the Word it self, *Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you, &c.* In this are included the being spoiled of our Fortunes, driven from our Estates, banish'd from our Friends and Country, (or, which is all one, forced to leave them for our Safety) imprison'd, tortur'd, or put to Death, for our steady Adherence to Christ, and to the Religion which he has prescrib'd to us in the Gospel. This was the Case of the Primitive Christians for 280 Years and upwards, (with very little Intermision) from the Powers of *Heathenism* and *Infidelity*; and it has been the Case of many thousands of glorious Martyrs and Confessors in latter Ages, who have suffered by the Tyranny of *the Church of Rome*, for rejecting the Idolatry and Superstitions, new Articles of Faith, and other Innovations, in-

introduced by that corrupt usurping See. We in *Great Britain and Ireland*, are, blessed be God, at present under such an happy Settlement, that we hope to feel no more of *this* Sort of Persecution, either as Christians or as Protestants. But there is one Degree of it, ('tis indeed the lowest, but 'tis Persecution still,) which is often suffered, even here, for the sake of *Righteousness*, in the second Sense of the Word; I mean the *malicious ill Turns* and *unneighbourly Offices*, which such as hate good Men for their Goodness are ready to do them upon all Occasions; at least if those good Men give them any Disturbance *in their Vices*. For this, tho' it be a great Kindness to the Debauched and Profligate to endeavour to bring them back to Virtue and their Senses, is what Experience shews us they can last of all forgive: To such Absurdities are they hurry'd Blindfold by that evil Spirit which leads them captive at his Will, that they shall sooner pardon you any ill Usage, than a charitable Design to reclaim them; and had rather bear with the *grossest Injuries*, than with the *greatest and truest Benefit*.

The *Second* Sort of Persecution is *Contempt, Reproaches* and *Reviling*, whether to our Faces or behind our
Backs.

Backs. And the *third* is *Calumny*, or *slandorous Falshoods* raised to lessen or defame us. That both these last are truly and properly reckon'd Persecution, we need no other Argument than the Text it self; for our Saviour having pronounced his Disciples blessed, when Men shall *revile* them, and *shall say all manner of evil against them falsely* for his sake, adds in the next Verse, *for SO persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* We shall consider this Clause as a *Comfort* to us under Sufferings, by and by; but we may here take Notice, that not only the ancient Prophets, but the *Apostles* also, and the *Primitive Christians*, underwent both *these* kinds of Persecution, as well as the *first* and most notorious Instance of it. They

1 Cor. 4. were *despised, reviled, defamed,* and
 10, 11, 12. passed through *evil report, dishonour,*
 2 Cor. 6. 8. and *contempt,* as well as other Hardships, for the *Faith of Christ*; and tho' the *Cause* be somewhat changed (from the Righteousness of a *sound Belief* to the Righteousness of a *conscientious Practice*;) the Case is still the same to this Day. True Piety is every where derided, ridiculed and insulted by the Prophane and Impious, and even the sober Moralist too often joins with them in censuring a strict and spiritual Life

as somewhat more than needs, and impeaching those who profess it of Affectation and Hypocrisie.

I come next to consider,

II. The *Blessedness* of Persons under such a State of Persecution as has been above described. Our Saviour has pronounced them blessed: But to a carnal worldly Mind it seems an unaccountable Paradox that they should be so. *To them whose eyes stand out with fatness, and who have their portion in this life, who place their Happiness in Ease and Honours, in sensual Pleasure and Enjoyments, it is a strange Assertion, that Men in Exile, Poverty, or Disgrace, under a load of Hatred, Calumny, Contempt and Persecution, confined to Dungeons, toiling under Chains, rack'd with Tortures, and exposed to cruel Deaths, should be happier and more blessed than they; and stranger still, that their very Sufferings should make them so.* Yet thus it is, whatever the short-sighted Wisdom of this World may conceive to the contrary. The persecuted Christian in the midst of all his Sufferings is an happy Man, and happy even *because* he suffers. To make this out, we will restrain our selves to the Considerations

considerations which the Text supplies us with, and those are three.

First then, The Christian Sufferer is happy in *the Cause for which he suffers*, the Name of Christ, or the Profession and Practice of Christian Righteousness. There is a Sting in suffering which may very well make us miserable, when we are conscious we deserve it, when we suffer for notorious Crimes, or thro' our own Imprudencies. St. Peter
 1 Pet. 4. 15. therefore warns us, *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a busy-body in other mens matters.* And even when this is not the Case, when we have done nothing to deserve the Rage and Malice of our Enemies, yet if that be all, our Comfort is but little in Comparison. 'Tis but a cold and negative Satisfaction we can take, in barely having *not done ill, or given no just occasion* to those who trouble us: The *Pleasure* of Suffering lies in this, when it falls upon us meerly for doing well, for adhering steadily to our Christian Profession, to the Practice of Holiness and Virtue, and to the Discharge
 1 Pet. 4. 16. of our Duty. *If any man suffer as a christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorifie God on this behalf.* It is an Honour done us, that we have an Opportunity of testifying our Affection
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and Fidelity to our Lord and Master by suffering for his sake. It is Christ who is struck at by the Malice of wicked Men; him they despise, and his Laws and Government they would abolish if they were able; but being out of the reach of their Insolence, and above their Power, those who faithfully adhere to him are in the Post of Honour, and bear the Brunt of this Persecution for him, and receive the Blows which are aimed at his Authority. A faithful and loyal Subject *values himself* upon defending his Prince's Person, or maintaining his Authority and Government, by suffering upon so glorious an Account; he prides himself in losing his Estate, his Liberty, or his Life in such a Cause: And shall not we esteem our Fidelity to Christ, and what we undergo for our Obedience and Adherence to him, as highly as in the Case of any earthly Sovereign? The Apostles did so, when having been imprisoned and scourged by the Jewish Sanhedrim, they went away *rejoicing that they were counted worthy* Acts 5. 41. *to suffer shame for his sake.* St. Paul also took pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, upon the same account; and seems to reckon it as an Honour and Happiness to the Philip. 2 Cor. 12. 10.

Phil. i. 29. *Philippians*, that to them it was given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him. This then is the first Argument of the Blessedness of the suffering Christian, that his Persecution is for the sake of Christ, and the Discharge of his Duty to him.

(2.) The Second is, That he has such noble Precedents before him, as the Saints and Martyrs in all Ages; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. This is plainly given in the Text as a Reason why we should rejoice under all Persecution for Righteousness sake. If Persecution were a Path altogether *untrack'd* and *solitary*, as well as rough and difficult, if it were far out of the Road of other pious Travellers to Heaven, a vast and howling Defart, where every Step we take should be at great Uncertainties whether it would bring us right to our Journey's end or not, we might be justly struck with Horror in our Passage; but when, tho' mountainous and craggy, 'tis nevertheless a *known* and *usual* Road, through which many Millions of good Men have gone before us to eternal Rest, 'tis a mighty Comfort to us, that we can be assured that the Way will lead us right to Glory, as it has done others.

others. And not only a *Comfort* but an *Honour* too, to suffer for the same good Cause, and in the same Manner, as so many bright Examples of Faith, and Piety, and Virtue have already done. For beside the Old-Testament Saints, the Prophets and Holy-Men of God, from Righteous *Abel* down to *Zacharias*, even *Christ*, the chieftain of our *sal-* Matth. 23. 35.
vation, was made perfect through suffer- Heb. 2. 10.
ings. If the world hate you, says he, John 15. 18.
ye know that it hated me before it hated you. And many of his faithful Soldi-
 ers, in all Ages since, have passed through the same Valley of the Shadow of Death to their Perfection and Reward. And is it no Honour, think ye, to us, to be used as the best and greatest Glories of our Religion have ever been? Especially when we fall so short of them in that illustrious Zeal and Piety which made *them* so famous. Is it no Honour both to them and us, *to be Partakers of Christ's Sufferings*, and conform'd to him who is our Master and our General? *It is enough for the disciple that he* Mark 10. 25.
be as his master, and the servant as his
Lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? But,

(3.) The *Third*, the great and finishing Instance of the Happiness of persecuted Saints, is *their Reward in Heaven*. The Promise of this, to shew how firmly God is resolved upon it, is twice repeated in the Text; *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, and great is your Reward in Heaven*. Well therefore may we not only run *with Patience*, but with *Joy*, the Race that is set before us; for the Prize of our high Calling is a glorious and immortal Crown, assured to us by him who has *all power in heaven and in earth*. The Prospect of this viewed with an Eye of Faith, and Conscience well examined, subscribing to the Application, is enough to make the suffering Christian happy under the severest Storm of Malice, and not only happy *under* it, but happy *by* it. Thus *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: having respect unto the recompence of the reward*. And the Apostle tells us, that the Primitive Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, as knowing that they had in *Heaven a better and more enduring Substance*. But to give this Argument its full Advantage, we must observe the Emphasis laid upon it in the Text,—*for GREAT*

Matth. 28.
18.

Heb. 11.
26.

Heb. 10.
34.

is your Reward in Heaven. Eternal Happiness had been promised under one special Advantage or other, as the Reward of almost all those Christian Virtues mention'd in the preceding Beatitudes; and to every one in such a way of Expression, as might best discover the *Parity* or *Suitableness* of the Reward to that which is rewarded. Now to adapt it accordingly in the present Case, he assured the persecuted Christian, that as his *Virtue*, and his *Sufferings* for it upon Earth were great, so shall also his Reward in Heaven be: His Zeal and Love to God, his Faith and Courage in bearing chearfully all Degrees of Persecution as they were thrown upon him, rather than commit any Sin, or neglect any Duty, are *above the ordinary Pitch of Goodness*; and therefore his Reward should also be a *brighter Crown of Glory* than other Saints enjoy, who have passed through the World with less Temptation, fewer Trials, and more Serenity and Ease. And according as his Sufferings have been more or less severe in the Cause of God and Righteousness; as he has gone through *this*, the *other*, or a *third* Degree of less considerable, or more difficult and important Sufferings for it,

and as he has born his Sufferings with more or less Patience, Steadiness, Resolution, Chearfulness, or Joy, he shall hereafter find his Happiness and Glory answerable. For so I take the Word [*great*] in the Text in a comparative Sense; their Reward shall be *particularly* and *proportionably* great with respect to other Saints, and to their own Sufferings.

That there are Degrees of Glory in Heaven is and has been the Opinion of most judicious Divines, supported not only by Arguments from the *Nature* and *Reasonableness* of the thing, and from the *Justice* and *Goodness* of God; but by the Authority of several Places of Holy Scripture, which sufficiently countenance such a Conclusion.

2 Cor. 9. 6. The Apostle tell us, *He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully.* Our Saviour also intimates as much,

Matth. 10. 41. where he assures us, that *he who receiveth a Prophet as such, shall receive a PROPHET's reward; and he who receiveth a righteous man as such, shall receive a RIGHTEOUS MAN's reward.* Why this, if there be not a more special Reward in Heaven for a *Prophet*, differing in degree from what

a *Righteous* or an ordinary good Man shall have? So to his Apostles also, when St. Peter pleaded, *Behold, we have for-* Mat. 19.
saken all, and followed thee; what shall 27, 28.
we have therefore? He returns this Answer, *When the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Other Passages might be insisted on the same purpose; but these may suffice to shew that there will be a Difference made in our Portion of Happiness hereafter, according to our Services, and the Degrees of our Piety and Goodness in this World: And that those generous Souls, who have struggled with the most Opposition and Difficulties in their Christian Warfare, who have bravely signalized their Loyalty and Love to God, their strict Obedience to him, and their active Zeal for his Honour and Interest in the World, amidst a thousand Contempts and Indignities, Sufferings and Persecutions, shall be received above with *double* Triumph, and lodged in some of the most honourable Mansions of Glory. It's true, *the sufferings* Rom. 8,
of this present time are not worthy to be 18.
compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. There is no Proportion
of

of *Merit* in them at all: But there is a sort of Proportion in the *Equity* of *Divine Goodness*, that the brightest Saint should have the brightest Crown, and the greatest Sufferer for God the greatest share in his Rewards. For tho' a Prince is *not bound* to reward the Services or the Labours of his Soldiers, however hazardous and toilsome, otherwise than by their stated Pay, because their Military Honour and Allegiance has already laid an Obligation upon them to do their utmost: Yet his Goodness, and his Love of Valour, puts him upon rewarding them for brave and gallant Actions, and *the more bravery* they have shewn, the *greater* their *Hazards* and *Fatigues* have been, and *the more Wounds* they have received, *the higher* still his *Bounty* rises, the greater Honours and Rewards he confers upon them. Great Reason therefore have we (upon such Assurances as Christ, our Prince and General, has beforehand given us in the Text,) to rejoice in all the Hardships we are exposed to for his sake: Which was

III. The *Third* Particular observed in the Verses now before us; the *Duty* of such as are persecuted for Righteousness

ness sake, Rejoyce and be exceeding glad. When we labour under the common Afflictions of Life, painful Diseases, Sicknes, Losses, Disappointments, or such Disgrace, Affronts, Hatred, Poverty, or other Sufferings which are *not brought upon us* by or for the sake of Righteousness, we ought to bear them with *Patience and Submission*, as sensible that we have deserved them, or that it is the Will of God, for wise and gracious Reasons, to inflict or to permit them; but this is not enough for him who suffers *purely as a Christian*, in the Cause of God and a good Conscience. A great deal more is expected from him than *to be patient* under what he suffers; he must *rejoice* in Suffering, as well as bear it calmly; nor must he be only *satisfied* or *pleased* with his Persecution, but *exceeding glad of it*, upon account of that peculiar Blessedness in it, which we have considered under the foregoing Head. I need not enlarge upon this; for what has been said there is Argument enough to excite in us even an Holy *Ambition* to be in such Circumstances, for such a Cause, upon the Prospect given us by our Saviour of such a great and glorious Recompence.

Let

1 Pet. 4.
13.

Rom. 8. 17.

2 Tim. 2.
12.]

Let us therefore rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy. For if we suffer we shall also be glorified, and reign together with him.



FINIS.



